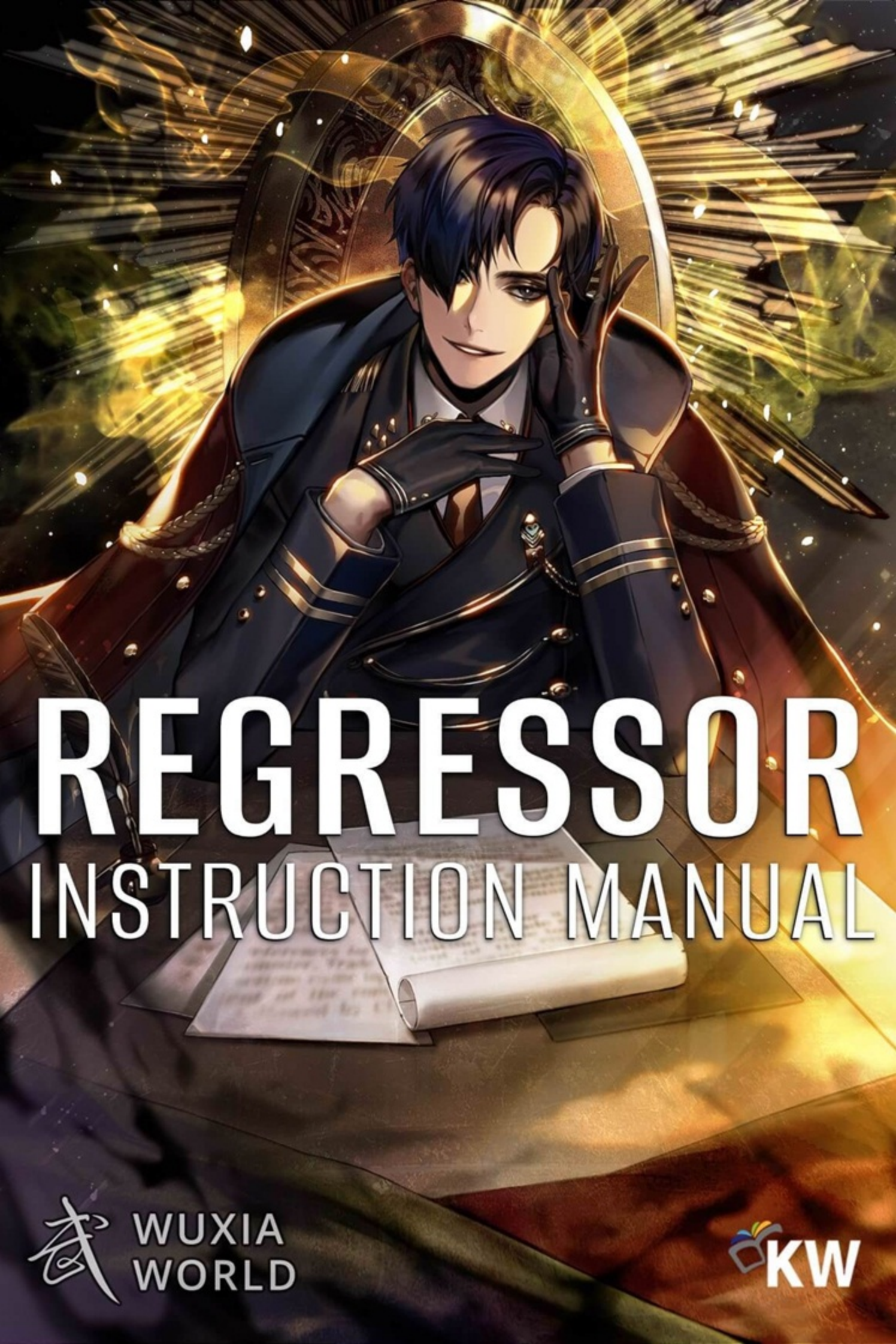
REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
KW

REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 10 -

-AUTHOR-
흙수저

-ILLUSTRATOR-
이유 / eu

[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 454
RESULT AND EVALUATION (1)

The fun was over. I wanted to sleep right away, but I couldn't do that. I still had many things to think about. The most important task I had to do right away was burning the evidence.

It would probably be better to say that Lee Ki-Yeon moved to another place rather than to make it appear as though she had never existed in the first place.

I exited the room and got rid of all the items I used a Lee Ki-Yeon. I contacted Lee Ji-Hye for the necessary administrative work, and the situation could basically be considered over by now.

Tomorrow morning, Lee Ki-Yeon would already be at the Union of Kingdoms.

'Did I really need to go that far?'

At this point, it was better to be cautious and being a bit more thorough wouldn't cost me extra money.

'What's more… '

I couldn't imagine Kim Hyun-Sung throwing away the shoe that Bitcherella had left behind. He had confessed that he had some feelings for me, so there was a huge chance that he would visit me in the morning.

Of course, it would already be too late by then.

I thought about leaving him a letter, but cutting him off rather than giving him false hope was better and less painful for him.

'Let's leave it as a good memory. Hm, yeah.'

However, if he got too obsessed, then it wouldn't be a bad idea to say that Lee Ki-Yeon died in a dungeon.

Anyway, it was probably best for me to forget all this because I had too many things I had to handle that were more important than this.

The gender-bending spell that had been blocking Jung Ha-Yan's detection spell was gone, so I was sure that she would soon find out that I was here. It was already late in the night, so she was probably sleeping right now.

However, I was sure that she would come here first thing in the morning.

Therefore, I decided to wake up early and head over to the Rift Museum branch office of the Blue Guild.

"I'm going to sleep after freshening up. *Ugh…*"

Organizing the series of events in a big incident had already become a habit of mine. I wasn't that smart, so I had to ruminate on what had transpired at least once. This way, I could decide on my next move.

'First… '

I decided to start evaluating the Rift Land.

'It wasn't bad.'

The Rift Land was definitely a great place for Adventurers to grow. The reactions were also better than I had expected, and I felt that it was great overall. It was a bit pricey for me, but Rift Land had a variety of services for people to enjoy.

Personally, I would rate it four out of five stars. It still couldn't be called perfect, but it was close to perfection. I would probably have to come up with other content and services, and I would also have to tackle the complaints about the drop rate.

Overall, the Rift Land was a great substitute for that annoying goddess.

The problem was actually the Friendship Clan. To be exact, the problem was the adventurers in Lindel.

I would probably have to investigate, but according to the Friendship Clan, they were one of the powerful rising stars of Lindel. I couldn't help but sigh because they were too weak to be the rising stars of Lindel.

They weren't the Blue Guild's allies as well, so I was a bit worried about fighting them in the future.

'They're too weak. Actually, that's not the problem… '

I got even more anxious when I recalled their embarrassing behavior. The Rift Museum would help them grow stronger, but I was sure that the Rift Museum wouldn't be able to help them in other parts.

I thought about what happened in my past life, and I finally realized why I was anxious. I had no idea what had happened, but if my assumption was correct, it was likely that we went to war.

I had no idea whether the war was between nations or between foreigners and denizens, but I was sure that everyone fought until the bitter end. Lee Chul-Woo and Kim Tae-Geon of the Friendship Clan had to have participated in the war as well.

Their days had to have been filled with anxiety, blood, and pain. I was also sure that they had witnessed their comrades die right in front of their eyes.

This life was definitely better than my past life if I were to compare the overall situation, and it was all because I managed to reduce unnecessary damage and even made everyone unite under one common goal.

However, in some ways, the current situation wasn't that great as well.

In my past life, I was focused on decreasing the number of people who could fight, but I had also trained useless people.

I was sure that the people who managed to survive and fight with Kim Hyun-Sung until the end were veterans who could take care of themselves.

It was actually an insult to compare those veterans to the adventurers I had seen so far because the latter couldn't even consistently defeat epic-ranked monsters. Our lovely regressor had to regress after failing despite having veteran adventurers next to him.

In that case, there was no way we could succeed when the people around us were worse or just as strong as the Friendship Clan.

“This is a problem…” I mumbled.

It would be strange if I weren’t worried about all this. I had to find out exactly when and where the threat would start and emerge. However, I didn’t think the threat was about to appear because Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t seem to be in a panic or in a hurry.

The main issue was that there weren’t any events that could prepare the adventurers for the upcoming threat.

There would be no growth without war, conflict, and argument. The Rift Museum and the demon dungeons would definitely make the adventurers even stronger, but their minds would remain the same.

Chosen warriors wouldn’t appear during a crisis, and heroes wouldn’t be born after seeing their comrades die right in front of their eyes.

Why?

It was all because of the current world peace. Those situations would never happen in the first place if there were no wars or conflicts.

After all, heroes and tough men were born during hard times.

Yes, the quote sounded like a load of bullshit, but it was true.

I couldn’t help but feel that I had to do something—I had to spark a conflict.

‘Should I wear a mask?’

A ridiculous idea came to mind, but the continent would probably thank me for creating an artificial conflict. The conflict had to be in danger for heroes and tough men to be born, but the issue was how I could create a large-scale issue.

‘Should I release a mythic-ranked monster from the museum?’

Forget it…

There was no way that I could suppress those mythic-ranked monsters if things went out of hand, so it was like saying that one should start hunting bears first so that they would be prepared to hunt tigers.

'Should I start a war?'

It was a worthwhile idea. The only problem was that stitching a wound and then ripping it again wouldn't look so good, so I decided to abandon the idea.

I didn't have a guideline about what type of people should be sacrificed, and the last thing I wanted to do was ruin the current situation.

The continent was becoming one, and I also couldn't hurt the patient I had just treated with my own hands just to create conflict.

'How about I cast Belial? Would it be difficult?'

Belial was a demon, so I had a feeling that he would cooperate. However, the idea made me feel anxious because I could still remember how Belial had backstabbed me back then.

I thought of many different ideas, but I eventually got a headache. I threw myself on the bed because I still couldn't think of a good idea. No, it was more like I couldn't make a decision on my own.

"I need Hyun-Sung."

I had to talk to Kim Hyun-Sung because I had to know exactly what was going on. I also had to know what he thought of the current situation as well as why he wasn't in a rush to do something.

I also had to ask him if he had any solution to improve the current situation. He seemed like he was focused on becoming even stronger right now, but I was sure that he had a plan.

If possible, I wanted to live the rest of my life comfortably and leave everything to Kim Hyun-Sung, but he lacked experience when it came to something like this, so I couldn't just leave him alone.

"I also can't trust him too much."

It was an obvious answer upon recalling Kim Hyun-Sung's behavior all this while. I was worried that he would nod his head and think that everything was perfect. I really wanted him to feel anxious because it would be better for me.

Anyway, the issue was that I had limited information.

The best-case scenario was Kim Hyun-Sung revealing the fact that he was a regressor.

I knew it was a difficult decision to make, but I still couldn't help but feel disappointed about how he still hadn't told me that he was a regressor. He was still suspicious of me as well, so I would actually be thankful if he decided to discuss his thoughts with me.

'If he confesses that he's a regressor and tells us the upcoming events… '

It would make things a lot easier.

'Shit. I can only dream about it… '

I thought it wouldn't be a bad idea to confess that I had Mind's Eye, but this wasn't the right time to do that. Therefore, I had to somehow extract information from Kim Hyun-Sung by talking to him.

'I'm going to talk to him soon, anyway.'

Kasugano Yuno was on my side as well, and even though the information she could see was limited, I could still make use of that information to decide on my next move.

I walked around the room in deep contemplation. Eventually, I stopped my pointless walking and took a hot shower before lying on the bed once again. I thought I only closed my eyes for a moment, but it was already morning when I opened my eyes.

'Shit… I feel so stiff. I really went overboard… '

I was tired, but I was relieved that I didn't have a hangover.

It was still early in the morning, and for the first time in a while, I felt like I had a dream about Jung Ha-Yan. Unfortunately, I couldn't remember it. All I know was that it was a pretty lewd dream, which was a bit embarrassing.

I wasn't exactly *frustrated*, so I thought that the dream was a side effect of returning to my male body.

"*Achoo! Ugh…*"

To make things worse, I felt like I was having a cold. I looked to the side and saw that the window was open. I couldn't really remember it, but I had to have opened it last night and forgot to close it before sleeping.

"I got too lazy. Damn. What if an assassin came in? Lee Ki-Young, you dummy."

I wasn't hurt, so it was fine.

After washing my face, I drank tea and looked out the window. I felt like I was getting better beneath the warm rays of the sun, and I started to calm down a bit. While I was spacing out, I suddenly recalled last night's dream, making me blush.

'I emptied myself today. I-I'm empty.'

What kind of bullshit dream was that? I shook my head, but the blurry images became more vivid, which made me blush even more. I wasn't sure what kind of side effect I was experiencing, and I actually became suspicious if another spell was cast on me aside from that fairy disguise spell.

While I was thinking about it, I heard a knock and a voice from outside.

"O-Oppa…"

"Is that you, Ha-Yan?" I asked.

"It's me," Jung Ha-Yan replied.

"Are you alone?" I asked.

"Yes."

I opened the door slowly and saw Jung Ha-Yan. It had been a while since I saw her, and she had to be in a good mood because she was smiling.

For some reason, I felt uneasy when I saw her smile, but I started smiling as well when she came up to me and gave me a hug. All this was normal and had long become routine for me, but the problem was that I felt strange.

'What's wrong with me?'

I had never felt this way before.

'Why… does she look so sexy?'

No, I couldn't really call it an emotion. I felt like I was getting tamed. My mind couldn't understand it, but my body was reacting to Jung Ha-Yan.

'I have never felt this way before… '

CHAPTER 455
RESULT AND EVALUATION (2)

Objectively, Jung Ha-Yan was a very charming woman. She still couldn't be compared to the supreme Hee-Ra noona, but she had a voluminous yet petite body. Her large eyes also made her look cute.

I wasn't sure if magic could influence one's appearance, but she definitely looked prettier compared to when we first met. Back then, she wasn't really interested in making herself look more beautiful.

But now, Jung Ha-Yan had become even more beautiful. Her pink lips made her look like a character straight out of a comic, and her skin looked like porcelain. She was pretty enough for guys like Yoo Seok-Woo, whom I could barely remember at this point.

Overall, she was charming, but she was nothing more than a cute little sister to me.

Jung Ha-Yan wasn't pretty enough for me to react this way. I was a man, so my heart pounded faster when Jung Ha-Yan hugged me tightly. Still, it wasn't enough to explain the strange feelings and signals that my body was giving off.

'What's wrong with me?'

I didn't know how to describe it, but it was different from the usual.

I was sure she went for a jog this morning because I could still smell her sweat, and the scent kept on stimulating my senses. I shook my head because it felt like I had consumed a stimulant.

I was flinching and trembling, which made me particularly unhappy about all this. My heart was pounding madly against my chest, and my breathing had turned rough.

I should have long gotten used to Jung Ha-Yan's body, but her body felt and looked more enticing than usual. I had no choice but to step back because of a physical reaction down there, but Jung Ha-Yan didn't allow me to do that.

I started to question her intentions because she acted like a leech as she pulled me even closer to her and made sure that our lower bodies were rubbing against each other.

The bright smile on her lips made it clear that she had realized that I was conscious of her today. Jung Ha-Yan's seduction was usually awkward and hard to look at, but right now, I started questioning whether she was a succubus or not.

I also couldn't help but think that she might have cast a spell on me.

'I hope she didn't go crazy and decided to learn some kind of seduction spell.'

She most likely didn't do something like that, and even if she had used a seduction spell on me, there was no way she would pull something like this.

Jung Ha-Yan had some knowledge about alchemy, so I couldn't help but think that she might have concocted an aphrodisiac or something. However, I would definitely notice if someone had used something like that on me, so it shouldn't be the case here.

With that being said, I started thinking that perhaps this was truly a side effect of the fairy disguise spell.

I felt uncomfortable, so I had no choice but to push Jung Ha-Yan away.

She looked disappointed, but when I kissed her lightly and patted her back, her disappointed look was replaced with a smile.

'I really like that she's simple.'

"Have you been well?" I asked.

"Yes! I have been doing well. There were a lot of adjustments that had to be made, but I'm fine. I-I've been working with Miss Sora, too. I've been really busy these past few days, so I had no time to do anything else. There were many things that required magic, and all the construction was done through magic as well…" Jung Ha-Yan replied.

"Han Sora?" I asked.

“Yes, Miss Sora,” she answered.

‘I’m sure she’s suffering… ’

The rookie of the Blue Guild was still traumatized, and she had grown a lot that I shouldn’t call her a rookie anymore. I couldn’t help but think that she was drawing her own hopeful future through this task. The Blue Guild had a branch office in Rift Land, so I was sure that she really wanted to be transferred over to the branch office.

‘Naturally, she probably worked the hardest… ’

Unfortunately, I couldn’t fulfill that wish of hers.

‘I should at least give her a raise.’

She probably wasn’t interested in pay, but I wanted her to be aware that I cherished her. I was sure that she wanted to avoid any affection from me, but I had to be affectionate for her because she was the only black mage on the continent.

She had contributed a lot during the war with the Republic, and she would also become useful in the continent enhancement plan.

However, it was undeniable that I was kind of worried. Kim Hyun-Sung simply misunderstood me, but Han Sora was basically a ticking bomb. Actually, Jung Ha-Yan was the same.

Jung Ha-Yan was a reliable ally, but she knew too much.

If Jung Ha-Yan were to unknowingly chatter away, Light Ki-Young’s happy life would end. Of course, she wouldn’t really harm me, but I still had to take extra care of her because of her volatile nature

Naturally, I thought I had to be a little nicer. I looked at Jung Ha-Yan with my usual smile, but I spoke as if she were the cutest thing in the world. I could feel Jung Ha-Yan was feeling better just by seeing my smile.

“It must’ve been hard for you. You couldn’t even rest…”

“I-It was kind of tiring, but it’s my job,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

'Wow, I'm really proud. Hearing you say that makes me want to cry tears of joy… '

"Still… weren't you lonely?" I asked.

"A-A bit? Actually, I was *really* lonely," she answered.

"Then… do you want to eat breakfast together? We can take our time looking around. I looked around briefly, but still…" I suggested.

"Yes! Yes! Yes! Of course, I'll eat with you!" she yelled.

We needed to go back, but rather than going back to work right away, I thought going on a date wouldn't be so bad. Jung Ha-Yan had been enduring the grueling job pretty well. She had recently blown up due to the marriage issue, but she hadn't caused any other trouble. She hadn't made a fuss about us being apart for a few days, and she didn't suddenly intrude and make things complicated.

The result of the training I had been giving her was finally bearing fruit. She was doing her best in her job and was both handling and holding in her frustrations exceptionally well. I wasn't going to give her a special reward, but I wanted to applaud her for holding it all in.

Of course, it wasn't that difficult for me to spend the little free time I had left with her.

I packed my stuff and walked out with Jung Ha-Yan. I flinched once again when she grabbed my hand and pushed her chest into me as much as she could, but I was fine.

We were famous, so people were looking at us, but Jung Ha-Yan seemed like she wanted the people to look at her. It kind of felt like she was announcing to everyone that I was her property.

She chattered nonstop amidst our unexpected date.

"I-I-I made that as well." Jung Ha-Yan pointed out.

"Really?" I asked.

"I-I made that, too. I also made that bridge there. Miss Sora helped, but I did almost everything by myself!" she replied.

Jung Ha-Yan showed off her accomplishments in a similar way to how our fathers often mumbled that they built the Hangang Bridge.

"S-So, I was kind of surprised when people suddenly visited, but I was fine. A few people tried to talk to me, but I didn't answer. I also didn't make eye contact with any men," she continued.

"You really didn't have to do that…" I commented.

Jung Ha-Yan was trying to show off her modesty and virtue. The conversation wasn't very useful, but my exhausted mind relaxed as I talked to her. It felt like I was going on a walk with a puppy.

'The weather is nice, too.'

Overall, it was peaceful, and I wasn't the only one who was enjoying this peace. People were smiling, and everyone was spending time in their own ways. Some people were eating on terraces, some were talking by the fountain, and others were shopping either in the general store or the weapon store.

I wanted to give this atmosphere a thumbs up, but my thoughts from yesterday made me feel uncomfortable. I got even more uncomfortable when I thought about how these people would soon fight for their lives on the battlefield once the upcoming threat arrived.

I looked around using Mind's Eye, but I couldn't find anyone with impressive stats.

The denizens of the Sacred Democratic Country, Republic, and the Kingdom of Others had better stats than the people around here.

The denizens of the Union of Kingdoms, who didn't participate in the previous war, and the neutral foreigners looked like they were out on a picnic. I had announced that there was an upcoming threat, but they were acting as if I hadn't said anything.

Still, the peaceful atmosphere wasn't that bad.

"It's too peaceful…" I mumbled.

"What did you say?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“I-It’s nothing. I was just talking to myself,” I replied.

“D-Do you have something on your mind?” she asked.

“It’s nothing serious, but… I’ll tell you later once I’ve organized my thoughts. Let’s start heading back to the Guild House. Did you build the branch office as well?” I asked.

“…”

“Ha-Yan?” I called out.

“*Huh? Oh*, yes. I made the framework. Miss Kim Mi-Young worked on the interior. The furniture was custom-made and brought from Lindel—*Ah!* The first floor of the Guild House is being used as a shopping district. It has a potion shop, and Miss Ah-Young’s smithy is right there as well…”

”The second floor is the true Guild House. Only guild members can access it. It’s bigger than the one in Lindel. The practice room, the alchemy workshop are big, a-and the rooms are big as well,” she answered.

“That makes sense. The buildings in Lindel have already been built, so it isn’t really practical to build a Guild House from the ground up. You can definitely build bigger Guild Houses here, so I’m sure many clans will come here,” I said.”

“A few powerful clans are already considering purchasing land. The Black Swan and the Red Mercenary Guild are already here,” she said.

“That’s smart,” I commented.

We continued walking while talking. Soon enough, a familiar emblem appeared in my sight, and I realized that we had already arrived at the Blue Guild’s Guild House in Rift Land.

It was bigger and more stylish than the Blue Guild’s Guild House in Lindel. On the first floor, Yoo Ah-Young’s weapons were being displayed, and I could see many adventurers around the potion shop next to it.

It seemed that I had to use a different entrance to enter the Guild House. I slowly turned to head toward the other entrance, but I paused upon seeing a familiar face.

“Sub Guild Master.”

“*Ah*, Miss Hye-Jin,” I greeted.

“You should have told us that you were coming. I would have come out and welcomed you… Did you just arrive today?” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“Yes, I was just looking around. But…” I trailed off.

The person waiting in front of the large building was Kim Hyun-Sung’s adjutant and my only friend. The way she walked around in front of the large building with her ponytail bobbing up and down made it obvious that there was something on her mind.

“Did something happen?” I asked.

“No, not really,” she replied.

“So, why are you outside…” I asked.

“I was waiting for the guild master,” she answered.

“Mr. Hyun-Sung?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“Didn’t you two go out together?” I questioned.

“Well… I didn’t hear the details, but I heard he was looking for someone. He said that he’s going to look for them on his own,” she answered.

‘I knew it.’

I knew where he was headed.

I looked at Jo Hye-Jin and saw that she was nervous.

“*Um*, Sub Guild Master. I apologize for this, but…” Jo Hye-Jin paused.

“Yes?” I asked.

“Did you… know?” she asked.

“Know what?” I questioned.

I couldn’t help but clear my throat because she looked like she had lost everything.

“I-I think the guild master is dating someone,” she answered.

CHAPTER 456
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (1)

"*Cough! Cough! Cough!*"

"O-Oppa, are you okay?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"*Cough!*"

"O-Oppa!" exclaimed Jung Ha-Yan.

"*Cough! Cough!*"

Jo Hye-Jin's question made me choke on my own spit, and the constant coughing was hurting my chest. Jung Ha-Yan looked worried. She definitely thought that there was something wrong with my health, and she looked as if she was about to call a priest, so I quickly raised my hand to stop her.

"I'm fine. I just choked on my own spit—*Ahem! Ahem! Ahem!*"

"S-Should I bring you some water?" she asked.

"It's fine. I'm going inside, anyway…" I declined.

"Are you sure you're okay?" she asked.

"Yeah, no need to worry. I really just choked on my own spit," I repeated.

"S-Still…"

"I'm fine."

I was done coughing, but I couldn't understand what she was talking about.

'What kind of bullshit is she talking about?'

I was sure that Jo Hye-Jin was misunderstanding something and was imagining all sorts of things. Her remark made my heart pound, even though I wanted to tell her that what she just said was absurd.

Jo Hye-Jin looked depressed while waiting outside.

Of course, I had an idea of what was going on.

Kim Hyun-Sung had probably told her that he would head over to the Rift Inn by himself.

The nervous Jo Hye-Jin was waiting anxiously in front of the Guild House because she couldn't wait for him in her room.

'If you're that worried, why didn't you follow him? You could have insisted and followed him secretly, you dummy.'

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung would notice her, but it was better than feeling anxious without doing anything. Kim Hyun-Sung was frustrating, but she was just as bad as him.

I finally knew why their relationship still hadn't progressed so far. After inwardly calling her a dummy, I started talking because I had to hear what was going on.

"Let's head inside for now."

"What?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"People might misunderstand, and nothing will really change if you just stand here without doing anything. Let's go inside for now, and you can tell me what happened by then," I suggested.

"Y-you haven't heard anything?" she asked.

"That's right. I haven't heard anything. I honestly don't know what you're talking about right now, Miss Hye-Jin… Are you sure that what you've heard isn't just a rumor? As far as I know, Mr. Hyun-Sung is seeing Miss Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild, but you can't really say that they're in a relationship," I replied.

"I-I'm not sure… I'm not sure, but Mr. Deok-Gu…" she trailed off.

“What?” I asked.

“He said he was sure…” she continued.

“He said what?” I asked.

‘What did that pig tell her this time?’

Park Deok-Gu could be unexpectedly helpful in the strangest situations, but he often acted like a troll in the strangest situations as well. The situation had to be the latter. As expected, I heard his loud voice.

“*Oh!* Hyung-nim!”

“…”

“Hyung-nim!” Park Deok-Gu called out again.

It seemed that the saying about how speaking of the devil would make him appear was still true. I turned my head and saw the large-framed Park Deok-Gu.

We had seen each other recently, and I wasn’t happy to see this pig. I got even more worried because I didn’t know where he had heard the rumors that he told Jo Hye-Jin and how Kim Hyun-Sung was suddenly dating someone.

‘That pig… ’

His proud expression made me feel anxious. He hugged me tightly, but I was still anxious.

“Well, it’s been a while… Nice to see you again. Hey, hyung-nim, have you heard?” he asked.

“Heard what?” I questioned.

“Well, our bro went on a date late last night with a mysterious woman!” he replied.

I became sure that he exaggerated the story.

“There weren’t a lot of witnesses since it was late at night, but I’m sure of it. I was

actually surprised. I honestly thought that our bro wasn't interested in women, but at the end of the day, it seems that he's still a man," he continued.

"Talk slowly. What exactly happened?" I asked.

"*Ahem*, so you haven't heard it yet. You'll probably hear it later, anyway, so I'll just tell you now. I'm not sure what happened, but our bro was enjoying a pretty romantic date with a beautiful woman last night at a nearby restaurant. They drank wine while sitting really close to the point that their noses were even touching. That basically confirms it. It's kind of strange when you consider his personality. Think about it. Our bro isn't the type to have wine and kiss some random woman late at night," he answered.

It wasn't a romantic date, and we didn't even kiss.

"There's a saying that a fair face may hide a foul heart, but who knew our bro would get involved in a scandal before anyone else? This is my assumption, but… I'm sure that woman is no ordinary woman. I don't know what kind of cunning woman she is, but I'm sure she's very experienced…"

"I'm worried that she's a gold digger trying to use our bro," he added.

'That was me, you pig!'

Park Deok-Gu probably didn't notice how Jo Hye-Jin's face got more serious as he talked. He definitely had a gift of instigation because he knew how to say certain things without holding back.

If I were to let him keep spreading rumors like that, he would eventually end up spreading rumors that the mysterious woman was pregnant with the child of the Guild Master of the Blue Guild.

He had always been so focused on other people that I had never imagined that he would take interest in this kind of news.

His excited look was a ridiculous sight to behold. Thankfully, he seemed like he wasn't investigating Kim Hyun-Sung's *partner*, but if Park Deok-Gu really wanted to do so, then I was sure that he would easily uncover the mysterious woman's identity.

"I knew it…" Jo Hye-Jin muttered.

“It’s too early to tell, Miss Hye-Jin. She could be someone he’s meeting for business. Rift Land had just opened, so I’m sure he has to meet a lot of people like merchants and clan masters of powerful clans,” I told her.

“You think so?” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“That’s what I thought at first, but I don’t think that’s the case. They met for business, but they were as close and as clingy to each other as rice cakes next to each other…” Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

“Isn’t that strange? From what I heard, they looked like a couple that has been together for years. Our bro is *very* shy, so it’s strange that he would be in that kind of situation with a woman he had just met for the first time. This is just my assumption, but…” Park Deok-Gu trailed off.

“Yes?”

“I think he has been hiding their relationship all this while. They have to be in a relationship for at least a year now,” he continued.

‘Shut up, you pig!’

“It’s not something to get so worked up about. It doesn’t even make sense, and it’s ridiculous that we’re talking about someone else’s love life like this,” I criticized.

“That’s true, but… don’t we have to worry about it? If he gets married and ends up having children, then we’ll have a sister-in-law and a successor…”

”We have to find out exactly what’s going on. The fact that those two walked around late at night is fishy, and he even left the Guild House this morning. Considering that, I’m a hundred percent sure, yes, that has to be it,” he explained.

“That’s…”

“There’s definitely something going on, and I’m sure he’s just shy to talk about it to his fellow guild mates. Our bro is famous, so he has to worry about public opinion as well. He has been walking around and making his presence known recently, so I think he’s thinking about announcing his relationship soon. I think he’s just testing the waters right now,” he continued.

'Why does he sound so convincing?'

His remark about Kim Hyun-Sung being in a relationship all this while didn't make sense, but this pig managed to forcefully fit a puzzle piece into the puzzle. The way he spoke about his bullshit sounded convincing.

Jo Hye-Jin seemed like she was sixty percent confident in Park Deok-Gu's assumption, and I couldn't help but acknowledge the fact that Jo Hye-Jin had fallen for Park Deok-Gu's trap.

"It doesn't make sense to say that he has been in a relationship all this while. I really think that they met for business. I can't see why he would hide his relationship from us for such a long time only to reveal it now. The timing is off, and the situation itself sounds off as well. I think you're wrong about this one as well, Deok-Gu," I explained.

"You have a point, but something smells fishy," Park Deok-Gu said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"It feels like our bro and that woman have known each other for a long time. I don't know how to describe it, but my intuition is pretty good. My accuracy is almost a hundred percent when it comes to something like this," he replied.

'This quick-witted bastard.'

He was correct about how that mysterious woman and Kim Hyun-Sung had known each other for a long time, but his sharpness made me gulp unknowingly.

"And the answer is pretty easy to deduce if you look at the situation from a different angle. I'm sure he's going to announce it to the public sooner rather than later," Park Deok-Gu continued.

"What are you talking about…" I asked.

"He has no choice but to announce it, so I think that woman is pregnant," Park Deok-Gu answered.

"What?!" Jo Hye-Jin exclaimed.

'What kind of bullshit is that, man?!'

“It’s the only explanation for why he suddenly wants to reveal his girlfriend, whom he has been hiding all this while. I think that’s also the reason why he looks uneasy nowadays. If I were in his shoes, I would be anxious as well…”

“I mean, it’s peaceful right now, but I feel dizzy just thinking about raising a child on this continent,” said Park Deok-Gu.

‘Your words are making me dizzy… ’

“I heard he has been spending more time walking alone recently,” he commented.

“What kind of nonsense—”

“*Ah,* it also explains that thing. Hyung-nim, Hye-Jin noonim. I’m sure both of you also know that this isn’t the first time that bro disappeared without telling us, right? There were times when we couldn’t contact him for an entire week, sometimes two…”

“He has never told us where he went during those times. I mean, I’m sure he’s getting his work done, but I’m also sure that he has spent at least a few days to meet that woman. Yes, it all makes sense now,” said Park Deok-Gu.

‘How did he make that connection?’

He was worthy enough to be called Master of Storytelling. I even felt like I was learning a thing or two from him. I realized from his words that one sentence was enough to instigate. Of course, dozens of documents and evidence were necessary to explain what he was saying.

Anyway, I had to protect Kim Hyun-Sung, but it was difficult because Park Deok-Gu’s momentum was suppressing me. We just ate dinner together, but this pig somehow managed to spin a story about how I was pregnant with Kim Hyun-Sung’s child and had been his girlfriend for over a year now.

‘You… crazy bastard.’

I was speechless, but I couldn’t just stand idly by and watch.

“You’re being too hasty, Deok-Gu. I’m sure Mr. Hyun-Sung would have told us long ago if it were really something like that. I also know his schedule whenever he goes

out, and I can say that he has no time nor the luxury to meet a woman," I told him.

"But…"

"You don't need to worry so much, Miss Hye-Jin. I think Deok-Gu has misunderstood the situation," I said.

"T-To be honest… it feels off because I saw him writing a letter last night," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"What?" I asked.

"I couldn't see it, but he was writing a letter in his study…" she replied.

"I think it's a proposal letter," Park Deok-Gu commented.

'It's not, man.'

It was probably an apology letter. Considering Kim Hyun-Sung's nature, it had to be an apology letter. He had to have been dissatisfied with the apology he had given last night, and I was sure that his plan was to hand over the letter of apology along with the shoe. I didn't expect him to lock himself up in his study to write something like that, but I was sure that nothing else had happened.

I got worried that if I were to let Park Deok-Gu continue like this, he would end up saying that Kim Hyun-Sung already had a child and he had been hiding his child from us all this while.

I placed my finger on my lips to signal to Park Deok-Gu that he should be careful because there could be other people eavesdropping on us.

Fortunately, he calmed down a bit when he saw my signal.

"…What should we do, Sub Guild Master?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

'Why are you asking me that?'

Jo Hye-Jin's reaction was betraying her usual demeanor.

CHAPTER 457
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (2)

I was sure that it wouldn't be just Jo Hye-Jin. The others in Kim Hyun-Sung's harem would also be taken aback by Park Deok-Gu's bullshit.

I had no idea what exactly was going on with Kim Hyun-Sung, but I knew enough to say that the issue wasn't simple.

Park Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild and that brat, Kim Ye-Ri, were the most aggressive. Kim Ye-Ri, who was probably practicing her Dance of Enchantment in a corner somewhere was irrelevant since she was just a child.

However, Park Yeon-Joo was different. She was a beautiful woman, but the ice prince Kim Hyun-Sung was looking at her as if she were some kind of rock.

I had no idea whether he was dense or dumb, but it was undeniable that his walls were impregnable. He was treating Park Yeon-Joo as if she were a rock, so it was easy to deduce how he was treating the others.

Jo Hye-Jin was still a virgin, and she even got chosen by a unicorn. Kim Ye-Ri was engrossed in her Dance of Enchantment, so it was even a bit ridiculous to consider her a harem member.

As for Charlotte, I had no idea what she was up to right now, but I was sure that she was in a similar situation as Park Yeon-Joo. Anyway, there was a delicate balance between the four women, but something ruined that balance.

The one who destroyed the balance was the so-called girlfriend of Kim Hyun-Sung. It was then that I realized that the four harem members were also drunk on peace. They had long gotten used to the peace, so they got along, but the sudden invasion of an outsider rendered them confused. In other words, they had no idea what to do.

'Tsk, they should have been prepared for something like this.'

What was happening with Jo Hye-Jin wouldn't have happened if they were always

prepared to duke it out.

Jo Hye-Jin was looking at me with a depressed look. Obviously, she had no idea how he should respond to Park Deok-Gu's shocking words. Naturally, I started talking because I couldn't let her keep waiting.

"What do you mean? It's not a big deal, so let's head inside. It's not good for us to stay here. Deok-Gu's words are usually not true, so don't worry about it. Nothing has been confirmed yet, and to say that he has a girlfriend all this while is absurd," I replied.

"But it's true that he had a romantic date with an unknown woman." Jo Hye-Jin pointed out.

"Rumors are often exaggerated. I'm sure it's just hearsay that spread like wildfire because people often like controversial news. And what's wrong with Mr. Hyun-Sung going on dates? It's not like he has a girlfriend. I don't really think you should worry about it, am I right?" I asked.

"…"

"I-I'm just worried. There's no other reason…" she stuttered.

"What are you worried about?" I asked.

"She might be a bad person. I'm the guild master's adjutant, so I think it's only natural for me to get worried. It's also dangerous to bring a mysterious woman over to the guild, and I'm worried that she might affect the guild itself," she answered.

"I'm taking care of almost all the internal affairs, so you don't have to worry so much, Miss Hye-Jin. We haven't even confirmed that she's going to join the guild in the first place, and even if she has other motives, I'll take care of it," I told her.

"But…"

"Don't worry about what Deok-Gu said, and Deok-Gu, you should stop saying things that will cause unnecessary worries. You can't just talk about something like that with a smile. The public has their eyes on him, so we have to stop bad rumors from spreading as much as possible," I said.

"*Ah*…"

"The Blue Guild is basically a business, and the guild members are the faces of the company. The guild master's role is huge, and I don't think I have to explain why, do you understand what I'm saying?" I asked.

"Yeah… I understand. I-I completely understand. I only spoke with guild staff members. I haven't told any outsider about it," he replied.

"I'm just telling you to be extra careful," I commented.

Park Deok-Gu looked sad.

'This guy… '

He was feeling guilty, but when I patted his shoulders as if I was telling him not to worry about it, he started smiling once again.

"I had no idea, so thanks for telling me," I told him.

"*Ahem*, it was nothing. Leave rumors like this to me. I can even extract information that doesn't exist," he said.

'Please don't do that… '

"All right, let's not talk about this anymore. Make sure to keep the guild members quiet until we get confirmation. Tell Ye-Ri not to worry about it, too. Tell Miss Kim Mi-Young to make sure that the guild staff members won't spread that rumor. I'll take care of this incident," I ordered.

"Leave it to me," he said.

It was difficult to act like I wasn't being affected. I wanted to act like a stoic, world-class authority, but I felt the same as Jo Hye-Jin.

'Shit… '

An evil deed would eventually be discovered. Right now, I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung was walking around the Rift Inn to deliver his apology letter and the mysterious woman's shoe. I felt kind of nervous because one wrong move meant the

end.

'I should have dealt with it better.'

I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung felt bad about himself. I started getting a headache at the thought of Kim Hyun-Sung being obsessed with this incident because he didn't manage to apologize to her properly.

'This is bad… '

I imagined him going all the way to the Union of Kingdoms just to return Bitcherella's shoes. Goosebumps broke out all over me at the thought alone, and I felt like I had to ask Lee Ji-Hye to take care of it for me.

Lee Ki-Yeon should have gone somewhere further than the Union of Kingdoms.

I just had to make sure that Ahn Ki-Mo and Park Deok-Gu would keep their mouths shut. As for Kim Ye-Ri, I could just use her Dance of Enchantment against her.

Things should go back to the way they used to be once the lovely regressor started losing interest in Bitcherella. I could only say that the incident was finally over once Kim Hyun-Sung lost all interest in Lee Ki-Yeon.

The issue was Kim Hyun-Sung's one-track mind. This would be a bit easier if I had something I could use to distract him.

'That's not going to be easy… '

Honestly, I started wondering if it was even fine for Kim Hyun-Sung to remain relaxed in our current situation. He had a mission to save the world, so why was he so relaxed? I started lampooning him inwardly, but then I recalled his current condition.

'No, this isn't it. It'll be dangerous if I think that way.'

I wasn't very happy about the current situation, but I shook my head when I recalled his schedule. He had been doing nothing but training. My typical day at work involved receiving reports of his training every day.

He also had been taking care of many tasks on his own in addition to going outside

for weeks on end to prepare for the upcoming threat.

I was actually a bit worried about how he was always swinging his sword as if he had gone crazy. Right now, Kim Hyun-Sung didn't need desperation. He needed a break.

I couldn't criticize Kim Hyun-Sung. For an entire decade in his past life, and even in his current life, he had always been driving himself to his limits. This Bitcherella incident could have sprouted from his subconscious desire to take a break.

I was sure he wanted to be in a romantic relationship as well, and he also probably wanted to have fun, rest, and enjoy what life had to offer.

In his past life, he got dragged here as a young man in his 20s, and he had to suffer a lot in the next ten years after that. Upon regressing, he found himself in a seat where he had to take care of many things.

At this point, I was sure that he was already at his limits, both physically and mentally.

I started feeling bad for him when I thought about how much fun he had last night.

'A break. He needs a break.'

There was evidence that he was mentally exhausted, and I was sure that he was even more exhausted because he couldn't stop suspecting his brother.

I wasn't sure if he was aware, but the appearance of a demon in his head was proof that he was tired.

If I were the lovely regressor's psychiatrist, I would have suggested that he should take a break. The thought suddenly popped into my head, but I started nodding because it made sense.

If Kim Hyun-Sung were more relaxed, he would have viewed the current situation with a wider view, and the demon in his head would have disappeared before I had to get involved.

"Miss Hye-Jin," I called out.

"Yes?" she answered.

“Has there been a change in the guild master’s schedule recently?” I asked.

“No, his schedule hasn’t really changed. He still trains and takes care of tasks simultaneously,” she answered.

‘Yeah… I’m sure that’s the case.’

It was exactly as I expected. To him, last night’s incident could be like an escape for him. I took a long break this time, and there wasn’t a law saying that he couldn’t take a break as well. Actually, he needed to take a break, but the problem was his way of taking a break.

At this point, I wanted to tell him to enjoy a date with Bitcherella, but he couldn’t enjoy a date with someone who didn’t even exist in the first place. Unfortunately, I felt like I had to find a replacement for Bitcherella.

Of course, I was sure that there were other options besides dating.

‘The simplest and most effective method is to replace Bitcherella with another woman.’

The woman had to exist, unlike Bitcherella. Otherwise, he would end up driving himself crazy by training and working without taking a break.

I quietly looked to the right and saw Jo Hye-Jin walking inside.

“Miss Hye-Jin,” I called out.

“Yes?”

“Please untie your hair,” I requested.

“What are you saying all of a sudden…” she asked.

“There’s something I need to check. Please untie your hair,” I repeated.

“Since you said so…” Jo Hye-Jin frowned slightly at my sudden request, but she started untying her hair without any complaint.

When she untied her ponytail, her long hair flowed down her neck and shoulders.

Now that I thought about it, I had walked around the black market with her before.

'I remember her looking good in a dress as well… '

Jo Hye-Jin was beautiful. However, she often dressed like a tomboy, so people were blind to her beauty.

"You look pretty," I complimented.

"You're making me uncomfortable, Sub Guild Master," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"*Ah*…" Jung Ha-Yan gasped.

"I don't have other intentions, Ha-Yan. Of course, my Ha-Yan is prettier," I told her.

'Shit. I almost died.'

"Are you making fun of me?" asked Jo Hye-Jin.

"I'm not, Miss Hye-Jin. It's not like that," I replied.

'Damn it.'

I shook my head after miraculously surviving the sudden peril. I managed to fix the situation before it got worse, but Jo Hye-Jin's expression had turned ugly, as if she had stepped on some poop.

Jung Ha-Yan was naturally all smiles.

Jo Hye-Jin's sour mood was understandable. After all, I had just basically told her that she was uglier than my girlfriend. Jo Hye-Jin wasn't interested in me, but any woman's mood would turn foul if they were in Jo Hye-Jin's shoes.

However, Jo Hye-Jin's ugly expression soon disappeared.

"Miss Hye-Jin," I called out.

"Yes?"

"What do you think of Hyun-Sung?"

CHAPTER 458
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (3)

Jo Hye-Jin was surprised. However, she quickly composed herself and responded both carefully and calmly, “I’m not sure why you’re asking me that question, Sub Guild Master, but the guild master is an amazing person…”

”He always works hard toward his goal, and he has a respectable demeanor. If you look closely, you’ll notice that he has many admirable traits. It’s funny to say this as a person from the modern world, but I find him worthy of being followed.”

“I wasn’t asking for a formal answer like that,” I told her.

“What?”

“I’m asking what you think of him as a man,” I clarified.

“Excuse me?” she asked.

“A man. What do you think of him as a member of the opposite sex?” I added.

“What are you suddenly…”

“Don’t you have feelings for the guild master?” I asked.

“W-Why are you asking, Sub Guild Master?” she asked.

“I have my reasons, so please just answer honestly. This is important,” I told her.

“How is it important? If you’re trying to make fun of me… I’ll file an official complaint. Please refrain from making rude remarks,” she threatened.

“No, I’m not trying to make fun of you. I’m asking because I’m curious. We’re friends, after all. It’s actually written all over your face, so you don’t have to deny it. You like Hyun-Sung,” I said.

“How could I… I have never had that kind of thought. I don’t know why you’re saying that, but I think you’re mistaking my admiration for the guild master as having feelings for him. I have never harbored such frivolous feelings, and it’s not right for me to have those feelings either. As the guild master’s adjutant—”

“No, stop saying that. You like him, that’s it,” I interrupted her.

“I don’t…” she said.

“Yes, you do!” I shouted.

“I-I don’t! I don’t…!” Jo Hye-Jin suddenly shouted.

Of course, she immediately calmed down because she felt embarrassed. I was shocked as well because her reaction was a little more heated than I thought. I expected her to deny it from the start, but she was even more determined to deny it than I thought.

Jung Ha-Yan was astonished by my questioning. I could see from her face that she still hadn’t realized that Jo Hye-Jin had feelings for Kim Hyun-Sung.

‘It’s not really weird because she’s not really interested in other people.’

I was sure that she didn’t really care enough about Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin to pay attention to them on a daily basis.

However, I couldn’t help but think that she was a bit simple-minded when I saw her relax upon realizing that there was no way Jo Hye-Jin and I would get together.

“*Hoo, hoo…*”

“…”

“*Whew. Ahem, ahem*. I’m sorry for yelling all of a sudden, but it’s really not what you’re thinking. I think there’s a misunderstanding because of what happened earlier, but I said that because I was genuinely worried about the guild master and the Blue Guild. I didn’t say it because of my personal feelings,” Jo Hye-Jin explained.

“Is there something wrong with liking someone? When a man and woman hang out together, they could end up having feelings for each other,” I said.

“I’m telling you that it's not like that…” she said.

“Honestly, it’s weird to see you deny it. You’re not a kid, and I’m not making fun of you for liking someone. I think your unicorn is going crazy by now. You’re an adult, and this topic is making you blush?” I asked.

“You have misunderstood that as well. Back on Earth, do you know how much—”

“What?”

“I’ll at least tell you this. Everyone knows the Wooshin All-Girls High School technician,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

‘She’s talking like Gangwon Province’s Love Doctor Park Deok-Gu.’

The blush on Jo Hye-Jin’s cheeks was still there, and I didn’t really care, nor it mattered that Jo Hye-Jin was a technician at Wooshin All-Girls High School. The most important part here was what she thought about Kim Hyun-Sung.

I could already see the answer, but she was just too embarrassed to tell me.

Of course, I knew that she knew that fact more than anyone else.

Everyone in the guild knew that Jo Hye-Jin secretly liked Kim Hyun-Sung.

She would always blush whenever they were together, and she had been using her adjutant role as an excuse to stay next to him.

She was probably thinking that she had been doing a great job hiding her feelings, but Kim Hyun-Sung was the only one who still had no idea of her feelings for him.

‘Should I support someone else?’

I had always been the type to come up with many different methods, so I thought it would be best to start out with Park Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild. However, the more I looked at Jo Hye-Jin, the more I felt bad for her.

‘Our Hye-Jin did suffer a lot… ’

She had died a humiliating death at the hands of the masked scum, and she only got

to confess her feelings right before she died. Personally, I thought we were pretty good friends, so if I had to pick one person to support, then she was the best choice.

I was sure that she would have a positive impact on Kim Hyun-Sung's mental health, but most importantly, she cherished him as well. Therefore, it was undeniable that she would be helpful in many ways.

She was also willing to sacrifice herself for Kim Hyun-Sung as though her life was worthless, so I really thought that she wouldn't be a bad choice.

"I'm not interested in the Wooshin All-Girls High School technician or whatever. I'm asking because I want to help you. Actually, it's more like a necessity," I told her.

"What do you mean…" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"It's related to Mr. Hyun-Sung," I replied.

"What?"

"The thought never crossed your mind when you were beside him? Mr. Hyun-Sung is at his limit mentally," I answered.

"That's…"

"You don't really need to hide it anymore. Anyway, you've never seen him rest, right?" I asked.

"That's not true. The guild master always takes proper breaks…"

"I'm not talking about resting in between training. Of course, eating and drinking tea between work also doesn't count…"

"I'm asking about breaks that ordinary people take—lying in bed without doing anything, enjoying cultural activities and hobbies. Enjoying his personal free time also counts as taking a break. I'm sure you noticed something since you're always with him, so I'm asking if you have seen him do any of that," I explained.

"N-no, I haven't," she answered.

'I knew it.'

I had to ask her because it had been quite a while since I worked closely with him.

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung was still doing the same thing. I thought he had changed a lot on a personal level, but it seemed that he hadn't really changed that much inside.

I turned and saw Jo Hye-Jin's grim expression. I was sure that she finally realized that something was off.

"He had always been like that, Miss Hye-Jin. He has improved since then, but he's still mostly the same. It's not strange that you haven't seen him take a break. Aside from whenever he eats with the guild members, I'm not actually sure what he eats. Does he still usually eat combat rations?" I asked.

"Something like that…" Jo Hye-Jin replied.

"I have been turning a blind eye, but it seems that it's even worse than I thought. He still hasn't changed even after several years, and I'm sure he has no idea that he has never changed since day one…"

"I understand that he feels unsafe, but our guild master's case is a bit extreme. He's always worried, always prepared, and always on the move. Is that how a normal person should live? I'm not even sure if a machine could live like that," I continued.

"…"

"I actually wanted to dance and clap when I heard that Mr. Hyun-Sung was with a woman last night. I believe that being with a woman would relieve some of his stress," I added.

"That's…!" Jo Hye-Jin shouted.

"Of course, I know what you're worried about. The sudden appearance of an unknown woman is weird, and there are many questionable parts to the story as well…" I trailed off before continuing. "However, it's still a fact that the guild master needs a space where he can truly relax and rest. That's exactly why I thought of you."

"You can't just create something like that just because you want to create one. A person's emotions… Even if I *do* have feelings for the guild master, the guild master—
"

“You can’t say for sure. This may sound funny to you, but you’re very pretty. I don’t know about Wooshin All-Girls High School technician or whatever, but you spend a lot of time with Mr. Hyun-Sung, so you have an advantage. And…” I paused.

‘She understands him well.’

“I understand what you’re saying, but… I’m not sure how you’re going to help. The offer is so sudden as well. Of course, this doesn’t mean that I have feelings for the guild master. I’m just telling you this because I’m curious,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

‘I’m the mysterious Bitcherella, and I’m in an awkward position right now. I’m worried that our Hyun-Sung may do something unnecessary and useless, so I want you to support him. Take care of his mental health from time to time since he’s struggling, and he also needs someone next to him so that he can rest properly… ’

I really wanted to tell her that, but I obviously couldn’t do that.

In the end, I had no choice but to give her a reasonable excuse.

“You know how greedy and territorial I am, right? It would be strange if someone manages to enter the Blue Guild when they emerged out of nowhere. Deok-Gu’s comments also didn’t make sense, but they *can* happen…”

“If Hyun-Sung is trying to find a partner, then I would prefer it if his partner was someone I know. This is the biggest reason why I’m telling you this. Personally, I have always been rooting for you, and the timing is perfect, so why not?”

“Anyway, are you in or not?” I asked.

“Y-you can’t really help out, and it’s not like I need that kind of help. Initially, I…” she paused.

She was still insisting that she had no feelings for Kim Hyun-Sung, but unlike her words, her complicated expression was betraying her.

I was sure that she wanted to ask for help. I had given her many bullshit excuses, but everyone knew that Jo Hye-Jin was a virgin who had never even held a man’s hand before, so she couldn’t really be blamed for her behavior.

It was highly likely that she was just confused about how she could get closer to Kim

Hyun-Sung and start a relationship with him. There were already many beautiful and talented women around him, but a mysterious pregnant woman suddenly appeared.

She had to have already forgotten how she looked at me in desperation earlier, asking about what she should do if Deok-Gu's remarks were true.

"It's unfortunate, but it can't be helped…" I said.

"…"

"I should contact Miss Yeon-Joo of the Black Swan Guild," I added.

"Wait, it's kind of strange that you would offer help for something like that. I'll stop you if it's something inappropriate," she commented.

"I won't really say that it's inappropriate. It's reasonable, and this is all for the guild master as well. Who would take responsibility if that cunning woman managed to trick our innocent Hyun-Sung?"

"He's like the father of our guild, and I can't just watch and see him getting tricked by some random woman. Don't you agree with me, Miss Hye-Jin? I know you're embarrassed, but you don't have to deny it. I mean, what are friends for?"

"I'm sure you have no idea, but I had eaten a lot of dinners with Hyun-Sung. I had done many things with him, and we even frequented the sauna. With my knowledge of him, I'm sure that I can help you," I said.

The room we were in became enveloped in silence. Jo Hye-Jin obviously felt conflicted, but she started showing signs that she would answer me positively.

'I knew you'd react that way.'

After a while, Jo Hye-Jin finally spoke, "H-How will you help me?"

"I want you to change your style and makeup choices. We should change your bearing, too," I replied.

"I see…"

"Most importantly, you must not do anything else aside from what I tell you. Think of

it as moving as my puppet or as my avatar for a few days," I added.

CHAPTER 459
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (4)

It had been quite a while since Jo Hye-Jin and I came to an agreement. The mages, including Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora, were forced to work vigorously, and as a result, Rift Land was slowly becoming the place we had envisioned.

Now, there were more completed buildings than buildings that were still under construction. All this was the result of the mages and the workers' hard work. Of course, they weren't the only ones who were busy.

I had administrative tasks to take care of, so I didn't have time to rest. I called for Kim Mi-Young, Lee Ji-Hye, Park Deok-Gu's woman, Hwang Jung-Yeon, and even Sun Hee-Young to continue working and burning the midnight oil.

Elena, the rookie who had just joined the Blue Guild, was in charge of the elves and the other races who wanted to settle in Rift Land.

Yoo Ah-Young, the only blacksmith of the Blue Guild, hammered away all day because she needed to create items that were good enough to be used as rewards in the Rift Museum.

Yoo Ah-Young really shone. The items and equipment she had created with Salit's bones or Dialugia's scales were high enough in quality that they could be categorized as high-end items.

The epic and legendary-ranked players were interested in Yoo Ah-Young's collection.

Aside from our potion business, it seemed that it was about time for us to dive into another business. I was sure that it would soon become one of the Blue Guild's pillars, so I naturally got busy to help ease Yoo Ah-Young's explosive growth.

We recruited many competent blacksmiths as guild staff members, but we still had no choice but to create a workshop system similar to the system we were using in our alchemy workshop.

We decided to just stamp the low-ranked equipment that Yoo Ah-Young didn't make with the emblem of the Blue Guild and added them to the collection.

Our primary targets were the rare-ranked adventurers. We were making quite a lot of profit with our high-ranked equipment, but the profit we were making with our low-ranked equipment couldn't be scoffed at either.

At one point, the low-ranked equipment actually made us more money than the high-ranked equipment. They were cheap equipment, but we managed to entice buyers by stamping the Blue Guild's emblem on those items.

The low-ranked adventurers' buying spree had gotten so ridiculous that most of them would spend their investment money on Yoo Ah-Young's collection before they even entered the Rift Museum.

Naturally, she wasn't the only one who profited a lot from the new market. The potion collection, which did well from the start, was making us a lot of money as well. The other businesses were making us money, too.

However, even the party members had to help the guild staff members with the sheer number of customers. Of course, the work was exhausting, but the party members were happy because we were making a lot of money.

The Red Mercenary and the Black Swan Guild were managing Rift Land, and they were in a similar situation. Aside from her night visits, I hadn't really spent a decent time with Cha Hee-Ra.

As for Park Yeon-Joo, I had no idea what she was up to because it had always been difficult to meet her. According to Lee Ji-Hye, her adjutant, it sounded like she was still looking for that pregnant woman.

Still, it seemed that she still hadn't discovered that all information about the pregnant woman was a lie that Lee Ji-Hye had cooked up.

I had always been thankful to Lee Ji-Hye, but I got even more thankful for her recent work because she had basically created confusion in the Black Swan Guild, which was a guild known for its intelligence network.

On the outside, it looked as if everything was working out smoothly, which I was still amazed about.

However, the main issue was still there. The holy power recovery rate still wasn't fast enough. Father Basel was contributing a lot, but his efforts weren't enough to make up for the holy power that the incompetent Benigoa had lost.

I couldn't help but think that perhaps it was because of the quality of the people's prayers.

When there was still conflict everywhere in the continent, the people's prayers were filled with sincerity and desperation, but now, they were only praying out of formality.

'You have to pray with sincerity! Anyway, all this will be over someday.'

That was why I couldn't consider it a priority. The demon dungeons and the Rift Museum couldn't become a complete substitution for the loss of Quest Creation, but it was good enough as the bare minimum, so we could hang on just a bit longer.

Right now, there were two tasks that were of the highest priority—I had to make the pigs work a bit more passionately despite the peace that they were enjoying, and I had to take care of our internal affairs.

I already had some ideas on how I could handle the former, but none of those ideas were good enough. In the end, I decided to prioritize the latter because I was already in the midst of the issue.

Of course, one of the internal affairs I was talking about was obvious.

'Hyun-Sung… '

It was obviously related to our lovely regressor. Of course, we still had a good relationship. Our meeting was quite touching, and as usual, he gave me a lot of gifts and attention.

I wonder if Kim Hyun-Sung felt the same as those men who were sponsoring a lot of girls whenever they showered those girls with gifts.

Kim Hyun-Sung still asked me how I was doing whenever he got the chance, and he also continued attending guild gatherings.

However, that was it…

I couldn't hear his honest thoughts or any information that we would need in the near future. I wouldn't say that there was a wall around him, but I felt kind of distant from him.

Of course, I could be the only one feeling this way because Kim Hyun-Sung was still acting like his usual self. I felt like we had gotten closer because he wasn't as suspicious of me as before, so all this could just be my misunderstanding.

However, I still hadn't made any progress on my greedy plan to develop our relationship to the extent that he would voluntarily tell me everything.

If possible, I would like it if we got close enough to the extent that he wouldn't tell anyone else that he was a regressor, but I didn't think that we could become that close.

In addition, I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung had no idea that I was anxious because his one-track mind was still focused on finding Bitcherella to return her shoes.

'I also never imagined that he would keep that a secret from me.'

I was kind of sad because I thought that he would ask me to find her. I knew that he had always been uncomfortable about personal favors, but my chance to take care of the situation was zero. He couldn't rest his mind at all.

I had no choice but to think that to become closer to Kim Hyun-Sung and move on to the next stage of our relationship, I had to take care of this troublesome issue first.

That was why I chose Jo Hye-Jin…

I had to get rid of his interest in Bitcherella. It was a worthwhile effort that would ease his mind, even just a bit. It was a satisfactory endeavor because it was basically hitting two birds with one stone.

The foundation was there as well. Of course, I still had to figure out just what exactly their relationship was and what Kim Hyun-Sung thought about Jo Hye-Jin.

"She's someone I can trust and rely on."

That was his answer when I asked him what he thought about Jo Hye-Jin.

Jo Hye-Jin had spent the most time with Kim Hyun-Sung out of all of us. I had to spend time away from Kim Hyun-Sung because of the nature of my tasks, but Jo Hye-Jin was always together with Kim Hyun-Sung because she was his adjutant.

They trained together, worked together, rested together, and ate together.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that she was the one who could best support him, so it would be strange if they had not even a bit of affection for each other. It would be perfectly normal for them to desire each other *physically* during a short break.

'Well, I think they desire each other physically… '

They spar every day, so Jo Hye-Jin should have long made Kim Hyun-Sung desire her physically, even without my help, because she was in the perfect position to do that. In addition, she wasn't like Kim Ye-Ri, who was too young.

She wasn't in Park Yeon-Joo's shoes either.

In other words, Jo Hye-Jin was mostly to blame for why nothing was happening between them. Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung was partly to blame as well.

It seemed that Jo Hye-Jin herself didn't see herself as a woman. She was just a competent subordinate, a reliable friend, and a trustworthy comrade. Naturally, the dense and slow-witted Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't have any feelings for her.

To make things worse, there was even a strange camaraderie between them, so Jo Hye-Jin was honestly in a bad position.

One thing I realized through the Bitcherella incident was that our lovely regressor wasn't a eunuch. He was a regressor—yes, but he wasn't any different from any other healthy young men in their 20s out there, so…

"The most important task is to make him see you as a woman," I spoke cautiously.

"A woman?" Jo Hye-Jin asked with a grim look. We already had several meetings like this, but it seemed like she was still questioning the plan. Of course, I could understand her doubt. After all, she still hadn't seen the results of our plan.

"That's right. Making Hyun-Sung recognize you as a woman is the top priority. I'm

sure he has been seeing you as a comrade, friend, subordinate, or junior at work because he has been seeing your warrior side more often than your feminine side," I replied.

"I see…"

"You're charming, Miss Hye-Jin. The issue is you're already in the comrade zone quagmire. At this rate, I may have to use radical measures and force you to stay away from him in the meantime," I suggested.

"What?" she asked, astounded.

"It's a radical measure, so you don't have to look so surprised. However, we do need to adjust your schedule," I said.

"What do you mean…" she asked.

"Let's take out your training time," I answered.

"What?!" she yelled.

"It's like I said. Tell him that you're not feeling well, and then we'll remove training from your schedule. Make sure you don't train, no matter what," I said.

"But that's…!"

"Your fieldwork has to be decreased as well. Actually, take them all out. For now, I think it's best if you only do administrative tasks without wearing that ugly-looking armor for the time being," I told her.

"Ugly-looking…" she repeated.

"Do you even take off your armor?" I asked.

"What kind of absurd question is that? Of course, when I sleep—anyway, taking off my armor is ridiculous. Why are you even saying that when you know my duties…"

"I told you, didn't I? You'll be excluded from all training, fieldwork, and missions for the time being. There's no reason for you to wear armor anymore. Do you really think that Hyun-Sung will like you if you wear the same armor every day?" I asked.

“I’m not wearing the same armor every day. I have another armor that I often wear as well,” she argued.

‘This woman… ’

This was the reason why Hyun-Sung couldn’t see Jo Hye-Jin as a woman. When I recalled how he also couldn’t see her as a woman even in his past life, I realized that the situation was even worse than I thought.

It seemed that we would have to take more extreme measures.

“Didn’t you agree to listen to me?” I questioned.

“I won’t accept it if it’s an unreasonable request,” she replied.

“It’s a reasonable request. Anyway, just don’t wear your armor from now on. Wear your normal clothes for the time being. I’m embarrassed to say this myself, but you’re very pretty and charming, Miss Hye-Jin…”

“However, that ugly blue armor of yours that reminds me of Bonobono[1] is making you look worse. I think you’ll look better without it. Take it off right now,” I ordered.

“…”

“Give me your armor,” I demanded.

“…”

“You’ll look a lot better without it,” I complimented.

“What should I wear?” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“I’ll prepare something for you to wear. I have a friend who is talented with this kind of stuff. Let’s change everything, starting from your makeup to your clothes,” I answered.

“This feels really official… I’m getting nervous,” she muttered.

“Of course, it’s going to be official. We can’t let a mysterious woman take our precious Hyun-Sung away. Aren’t you doing this with me because you don’t want that

to happen as well? This is all for the guild," I said.

"…"

"Now, then. Come in, Miss Ji-Hye," I called out and saw a figure walking in.

Jo Hye-Jin was surprised. I was sure that she could have never imagined that Lee Ji-Hye would be here. Jo Hye-Jin knew that she and I were close, but she probably didn't expect that we were *this* close.

"You made me wait for a long time…" Lee Ji-Hye complained.

She was a specialist in this field, and I saw her bringing something in.

"You're a mess," she remarked.

All of a sudden, Lee Ji-Hye started spitting facts.

---

1. Bonobono is an anime short that is focused on the lives of a few animals ☜

CHAPTER 460
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (5)

Lee Ji-Hye was the most feminine woman based on my standards, so I made her join this operation. Cha Hee-Ra was the type who preferred comfortable clothes rather than stylish ones, while Elena's face didn't really require any makeup.

As for Kasugano Yuno, it was actually difficult to believe that she was from the modern world because the clothes she often wore reminded me of the 90s—no, she actually looked like she was from the Meiji Restoration period.

Honestly, I couldn't even begin to describe Jung Ha-Yan. It seemed like she was doing her best, but she was still lacking in many parts. She reminded me strongly of a college student who had just started wearing makeup.

If I were to categorize the women around me, I would say that Dialugia and Elena were in the same category. However, they weren't even humans, so it would be a bit unfair to mention them.

Sun Hee-Young was the closest to my ideal type, and I was sure that her natural look could seduce many men, but…

'She wouldn't be the right person for this operation… '

Lee Ji-Hye was the mother of Bitcherella, so there was no need to bring Sun Hee-Young into this.

Lee Ji-Hye was the master of transformation and disguise. I wasn't in a position to judge other people's appearance, but Lee Ji-Hye looked pretty ordinary.

Unlike the monsters around me, she was petite and cute.

She wasn't voluptuous like Cha Hee-Ra, she didn't have a well-defined face like Kasugano Yuno, and she also couldn't be compared to Dialugia or Elena. If I had to compare her to Elena, Elena was a peacock, and Lee Ji-Hye was a baby sparrow.

However, when I imagined Lee Ji-Hye standing next to the others, I couldn't see that *big* of a difference.

Lee Ji-Hye was a beautiful and charming woman to me. I thought it was like magic because even though she wasn't born with gorgeous feathers like someone else, the baby sparrow brought colorful feathers from somewhere, and she also knew how to showcase herself better than anyone else. I wasn't sure if I felt this way because of her characteristic or because I was her soulmate, but that was how she looked in my eyes.

She was amazing, no matter what angle I used to look at her.

I could also remember that even during the tutorial dungeon, she already looked pretty despite her ordinary features. This meant that even though there weren't any bathrooms in the tutorial dungeon, she still managed to take care of herself.

Upon recalling the past, goosebumps suddenly broke out all over me.

'What's up with her?'

I wasn't sure if the others were the same, but Lee Ji-Hye had never stopped taking care of herself.

She understood better than anyone that appearance and personality were enough to make people interested in others, so she wouldn't just stand idly by after seeing Jo Hye-Jin. Jo Hye-Jin hadn't been taking care of herself, and Lee Ji-Hye's blunt comment hurt Jo Hye-Jin's doubting heart.

"Is she really a woman?" Lee Ji-Hye asked me.

"If you're asking biologically, then yes, I am. My gender—" Jo Hye-Jin responded.

"That's not what I'm asking. Well, I shouldn't really criticize since everyone's lifestyle is different, and there are many people out there. I'm actually more surprised than you are because it seems like you're living a life that's completely different from mine. *Ah!* It seems like you're somewhat interested in beauty, seeing that you're managing your nails," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"It gets in the way while training, so…" Jo Hye-Jin muttered.

"…" I had no idea what to say.

"A-Anyway, it's a disaster. Fortunately, you're naturally pretty, so I'm sure you'll look a lot better with some work. I'm sure you already know, but please keep this a secret from Yeon-Joo unni. I feel like I'm helping her rival, so I don't really feel comfortable with all this. Anyway, Do you not wear makeup at all?" asked Lee Ji-Hye.

"They get erased if I sweat a lot, so I don't…" replied Jo Hye-Jin.

"Waterproof makeup doesn't exist here, but we can use magic for that. A simple coating spell can take care of that. I think it's more like you're not interested in makeup. There are makeup shops all over Lindel, and you really haven't been to one of them? Even the Black Swan Guild had launched many shops…" Lee Ji-Hye muttered.

"I'm sorry. I didn't have much time," Jo Hye-Jin apologized.

"You're just making an excuse. You just have to wake up an hour earlier every day and sleep thirty minutes later than usual. I should take you to a shop later. You're lacking in many areas, but it should be fine. There are lots of makeup here that can replace the makeup of the modern world, so it should be okay."

"Now… let's see. We can use matte lipstick for your lips… and what's that blue armor over there? Is that what you usually wear? Even if it's just armor, you should still consider the style…" said Lee Ji-Hye.

"I-Isn't the color pretty?" she asked.

"It's not. I feel like that's the color Bonobono would turn into if he were constipated," Lee Ji-Hye replied.

"Ye-Ri picked it out with me," she commented.

'Wow, Kim Ye-Ri! You're so mean.'

I told her earlier that her tacky armor was bothering me. I had never imagined that Kim Ye-Ri had picked it out with her, but I was sure that she picked that armor to bring Jo Hye-Jin down. If that weren't the case, then Kim Ye-Ri just had really bad tastes.

Anyway, the situation wasn't bad. I wasn't sure exactly what Lee Ji-Hye was doing, but it looked like it was effective. I wanted to give her a thumbs-up because she walked in and made remarks without holding back.

The way she spoke with confidence and certainty made her look like a true expert in this field. Well, she was actually an expert, so it was only natural for her to behave that way.

"You don't have anything planned today, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"I have afternoon training, and I have some work to handle later," Jo Hye-Jin replied.

"I think it would be best if you get rid of the afternoon training," she suggested.

"What?"

"I'm telling you that you should get rid of the afternoon training. Follow me. I'll show you how you should wash up. I need to see what kind of products you're using because it actually messed your hair up this badly. Wait here, oppa," she said.

"Okay," I replied.

Lee Ji-Hye grabbed the hesitant Jo Hye-Jin's hand and dragged her to her bathroom.

It wasn't with them, but the issue was that I could still hear them.

"You need to change your underwear as well. The design of your underwear doesn't fit your age. I'm sure if someone saw this, they would run away in shock. If I were a guy, I would run away as well," Lee JI-Hye commented.

"…"

"And it looks like there are many places that have to be cleaned up. Hold on," she continued.

"W-Where are you touching?" Jo Hye-Jin stuttered.

"Stay still," said Lee Ji-Hye.

"Stop touching me! Stop it! I won't stand still and watch," yelled Jo Hye-jin.

“I’m not doing this because I want to! I’m just trying to help, so be quiet,” yelled Lee Ji-Hye back.

“*Ah!*”

There was a short scream, and what followed afterward were suppressed moans. I had no idea what was going on, but when they emerged, Lee Ji-Hye had a satisfied look, while Jo Hye-Jin looked like she was hurt.

Lee Ji-Hye proceeded to make Jo Hye-Jin sit in front of the makeup table. Afterward, she started displaying her skills while talking. I knew this was a bit of an exaggeration, but I could see how Jo Hye-Jin’s demeanor was changing in real time.

“I brought the products that I use for now along with a few expensive ones. Since I can’t help you every time, I think it’s best if you learn it yourself. *Ah*, let’s take care of your hair first. I won’t cut it a lot, and I’ll also give you wavy hair,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Okay,” answered Jo Hye-Jin.

“I’m going to clean up your eyebrows. I’ll make a line, so all you have to do is draw your eyebrows by following the line,” she instructed.

“O-Okay.”

“Open your mouth slightly. Good…” she mumbled.

“*Hm*…”

“Applying it naturally rather than painting it on your lips will make it look better on you, and this is why I’m jealous of people who are naturally pretty. Your skin is really good as well. Is it because you exercise a lot that your skin is really supple?”

”Anyway, you have a great body as well. I’m consistently taking care of myself, but… this is just cheating. Your proportions are great, and if you were on Earth, you could have been a model. I’m not joking, really,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“T-Thank you…” Jo Hye-Jin stuttered.

“You don’t have to be so shy. You should feel confident in yourself. Pretty people should know better than anyone that they’re pretty. It’s tiring, but if you use your

beauty well, your life will be a lot easier. Lookism exists here as well. It will be really easy for you to seduce men with a face like this," Lee Ji-Hye continued.

"…"

I had no idea what was going on. Lee Ji-Hye was stringing up words that I couldn't quite grasp, so it was only natural that I wouldn't understand what she was talking about. One thing I was sure of was that she was doing a really good job because Jo Hye-Jin's dramatic change was enough to make my jaw drop.

'I finally understand why Yul-Ha was always watching those beauty YouTubers.'

It was fun. Lee Ji-Hye talked a lot, so there wasn't even a moment of silence.

The way she drew on Jo Hye-Jin's face reminded me of Bob Ross.

'I think she'll be really successful as a Youtuber… '

Jo Hye-Jin's real-time transformation was hyping me up. Soon, a guild staff member brought piles of clothes into the room. It was my first time seeing dozens of hangers in a large room, which didn't really fit in Jo Hye-Jin's room which only had a single closet.

There were so many clothes that the guild staff member had to split them up. I couldn't see Jo Hye-Jin anymore, thanks to the mountain of clothes, but I could hear that they were almost done.

"Stand up and try on some clothes. Is there a particular style that you like?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Not really, but… if I had to pick, how about that blue dress?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"Why do you like blue so much? And you should pick out a few casual clothes. Don't you think it's strange to wear a dress while working? There are clothes made for certain places, so keep that in mind…"

"Anyway, Let's do something simple without going overboard…" Lee Ji-Hye made a decision and said, "This is my personal preference, but I honestly don't like overdoing things. There are people who always wear strange decorations on their heads, and that style is completely out of the question because it's not like you're

cosplaying…"

"The point is that basic accessories and a bag are enough. Stand up and raise your arms. Take off your clothes," ordered Lee Ji-Hye.

"But…"

"He can't see you, anyway. Let me place a few outfits on you. All right. *Hm*…" Lee Ji-Hye muttered.

"W-what…"

"You look good and pretty. I'm actually getting jealous," Lee Ji-Hye told Jo Hye-Jin.

"Really?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"Why would I lie? I'm in the middle of work here, you know?" replied Lee Ji-Hye.

"But…"

"Now, let's see. Oppa, we're ready. Come and take a look," Lee Ji-Hye called out to me.

"Okay." I walked toward them while pushing away the pile of clothes, and I finally saw Jo Hye-Jin's face after her makeup was done.

I couldn't describe her at all. However, she was definitely beautiful.

She had light wavy hair and was wearing a blouse and a skirt.

It was a simple outfit, but my jaw dropped unknowingly while staring at her.

She didn't look fancy at all, but her necklace matched her outfit very well. And her face—she had a pretty face, but the magic of makeup transformed her so much that I couldn't actually say with confidence that she was the same pre-makeup Jo Hye-Jin.

Lee Ji-Hye nodded proudly next to her as if she was satisfied with the outcome.

Lee Ji-Hye looked like she had cleared an epic-ranked quest.

"How do I look?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“You’re beautiful…” I answered.

“If you’re saying that to make fun of me—”

“No, you really look beautiful. Have you looked into a mirror yet?” I asked, interrupting her.

“Not really…” she mumbled.

“Then go and take a look. You’ll see whether I’m making fun of you or not,” I told her.

I was sure that she would be the most surprised by her current look.

‘At last, you can go and see Hyun-Sung now.’

CHAPTER 461
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (6)

'Jo Hye-Jin's makeover is done, and it's a success!'

I could see Jo Hye-Jin looking at herself in disbelief. It was understandable for her to react that way because even I couldn't believe her transformation, even though she was standing right in front of me. It was a bit funny to see her touch her face, and it reminded me of how characters in comics often reacted to their own makeover.

She didn't say cheesy lines like '*is this really me?*'

However, she didn't really have to do that because I could easily deduce what she was thinking.

"No way…" Jo Hye-Jin mumbled.

"Yes, way. I worked hard, so it's only natural for you to look this good. I don't even put in this much effort when I put my own makeup on," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"I-It's amazing. How did I change so much…" Jo Hye-Jin muttered.

"It's not that big of a change if you think about it. It's kind of unfair, but you have a pretty face. Even I think you're pretty. Shit, every pretty girl has to die," cursed Lee Ji-Hye.

"Still, this much change is…" Jo Hye-Jin trailed off.

I had never expected that this was actually possible as well.

I knew that she would look different, but I couldn't help but think that she was a scratch card that hadn't been scratched just yet. Jo Hye-Jin, who was always as sharp as a spear, was no longer here. I was confident that she would be able to seduce the heartthrob Kim Hyun-Sung with just a finger, and the realization made me smile.

It was true that I thought this mission would still take us a long time to complete, but

I wanted to dance in joy because Jo Hye-Jin's transformation meant that the time to complete the mission was reduced drastically.

"So, what's next?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Now, we'll move on to the main mission. Good job, Ji-Hye. All right. Take the equipment, Miss Hye-Jin," I ordered.

"Equipment? What equipment?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"I told you earlier. You'll be moving as my avatar, and Anemone's Eyes will be following you at all times… This is the receiver. Place it inside your ear," I instructed.

"…"

"I-Is this really necessary?" she asked.

"It is. If we don't do this, you won't be able to do anything other than swing your spear. If we were in modern times, I could give you advice through text, but that's not the case here. You need to talk to him face-to-face…"

"To be honest, I'm not confident that you'll do well out there, and I'm telling you this just in case, but you must follow the mission, no matter what. Just know that things will get awkward the moment you feel embarrassed or reject the order. I'm doing this to support you, and all you have to do is follow," I said.

"But…"

"You have to promise. This is the top priority. Promise me," I said.

"That's…"

"Promise me," I repeated.

"As long as it's not extreme…" mumbled Jo Hye-Jin.

"You promised." I pointed out.

"All right."

'It should be fine… '

Jo Hye-Jin agreed, so I was convinced that she would follow my words. In addition, she had always been a strict person, so she shouldn't break her word.

"Now, let's head out," I said.

"Where are we going?" she asked.

"What do you mean? We're heading to Hyun-Sung's office. Didn't you say he has work to do?" I answered.

"Am I going like this?" she questioned.

"Were you thinking about going there wearing your blue armor? It's your casual clothes, anyway. You can wear comfortable clothes inside the guild. Aren't you tired of wearing the same armor every day? Anyway, let's hurry up," I answered.

"*Oh…* okay," she replied.

Jo Hye-Jin didn't seem all that excited. I also got annoyed to see her flinch and hesitate about whether she should really go or not, but I could understand her feelings.

In the past few years, she had never really taken her armor off, whether she was outside or inside the guild. Of course, there were some exceptions, but it was an event that happened only once every few months.

She was also a bodyguard, so I could understand the idea of being prepared all the time, but no one really told her to wear armor all day. I wasn't sure why she had been insisting on wearing that armor, but I was sure that she had gotten comfortable in it.

Therefore, walking around the guild while dressed in something else other than her armor had to be a pretty difficult mission for her.

'This girl… '

"Have some confidence. You looked at yourself in the mirror earlier, right? You can even stab a monster's eyes without any hesitation, so what are you so scared about?" I asked.

“I’m not scared. It’s just awkward…” she answered.

“You should be feeling awkward about other things rather than what you look like. Anyway, stop hesitating and go outside. You look more nervous than people who are about to enter a dungeon,” Lee Ji-Hye chimed in.

“All right. Stop pressuring me. *Whew*,” Jo Hye-Jin replied with a sigh.

“Hurry up,” I said.

“O-Okay,” she stuttered.

“…”

“…”

“Go out already!” I yelled.

“O-Okay!” she yelled back.

Jo Hye-Jin kept hesitating.

I didn’t want to do this, but I had no choice but to make an unnecessary comment.

“…”

“…”

“*Ha*… You’re really pretty.”

“…”

“You’re charming and pretty. You look so beautiful that anyone would fall for you, so you don’t have to worry about anything. Just think of it as going out for a hunt or carrying out a mission. Actually, it’ll be a lot easier if you consider this a spy mission. You really don’t have to be so hard on yourself, so please just go,” I explained.

“O-Okay,” she replied.

When I patted Jo Hye-Jin’s back, she finally moved forward. She was definitely

surprised because she looked back slightly, but as the door closed, she looked as if she had made up her mind.

Now that she was ready, I had to make my own preparations as well.

I was all smiles as I entered another room and started setting things up. The room looked like an official control room. There were five magic hologram monitors in the room. It seemed a bit excessive, but I had to see even the tiniest of body language, so five monitors weren't actually enough.

I really had to make sure that I could see as much information as possible.

Lee Ji-Hye helped me set up the room, even though she was definitely tired after doing most of the work today. However, she didn't seem that annoyed. She kept on nodding as if she was pleased, and it seemed that she really liked this task.

"Thanks, noona," I said.

"It's nothing. It's something I had to do as well. Anyway, the more I think about it, the craftier I find you," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"No need to play dumb since I know what you're thinking, oppa," she answered.

'What am I thinking…?'

I could usually deduce Lee Ji-Hye's ridiculous thoughts, but this time, I had no idea what she was talking about. When I looked at her as if I were asking what she was talking about, Lee Ji-Hye spoke while cleaning a table.

"You're trying to plant one of your people next to Hyun-Sung oppa, right? It's about time you started doing that," she asked.

'What is she talking about?'

"I don't think it'll be a big problem considering how much you think about him, but it's not a bad idea to have a little insurance either. It's like a queen-making project, so I think it'll be pretty fun. You're more meticulous than me, seeing that I didn't even think about doing *that*. That's my Lee Ki-Young~" she said.

'What the hell is she saying?'

Perhaps because I was dumb, but I had never really thought about doing something like that at all.

Unlike Lee Ji-Hye's thoughts, my goal was to actually help Hyun-Sung.

Of course, I couldn't really blame her for misunderstanding it because it made sense in the overall picture.

I would stay with Kim Hyun-Sung forever, even during the end of the world. However, I couldn't help but think about how the internal affairs of Blue Guild would become even more complicated the stronger we grow.

Factions could appear out of nowhere, and I might have to fight politically against someone in the Blue Guild.

Of course, it was difficult to imagine a group of people going against me when I already had so much power, but the future had always been unknown, so it wouldn't be a bad idea to have Jo Hye-Jin by his side. If I had to give an example, I was like Minister Lee, who was standing behind the king's wife.

Jo Hye-Jin said that she felt uncomfortable, but it made sense considering the strange relationship between her and me.

'Not bad… '

This was a project that wouldn't give any results soon, but it was a worthy investment.

"Well, that's not the only reason, but think what you want. Anyway, clean that up as well. I think we should set up another monitor," I told her.

"I'm not surprised. I can help you with this, right?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"I called you here so that you can do this with me. Are you done with your tasks?" I asked.

"I still have some tasks that I have to handle, but I don't really have to worry about them. Let's finish setting these up and sit down. Personally, this is kind of

contradictory, but I'm curious about what's going to happen as well…"

"I honestly thought that Hyun-Sung oppa was either a eunuch, a homo, or a person who only likes to have sex with no strings attached. He didn't really react to our Yeon-Joo unni, but it's starting to make sense when I thought about how he was in the tutorial dungeon as well," she answered.

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"I don't like saying this about myself, but I'm pretty enough no matter where I go. Back then, he didn't even look my way, and my pride was hurt a lot," she replied.

"Well…"

"Do you know how surprised I was when I heard that he had dinner with someone? He's a lot better now, but he still isn't really the type to eat dinner with a stranger." Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

"I was surprised as well. *Ah*, start the mana connection there," I instructed.

"Yeah, yeah. I think this should be enough… Do you need anything else?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"Not really," I answered.

"Let's start," she suggested.

"All right."

Lee Ji-Hye booted everything up, and the magic hologram started lighting up one by one. A monitor was displaying Jo Hye-Jin's point of view, the other monitor displayed a close-up of her face, and there were a few holograms showing her entire body.

Of course, I didn't do this because I wanted to leer at her body. It was all because the hands and feet were important because one could extrapolate a lot of information from them by reading the target's body language.

The first thing I saw was Jo Hye-Jin's nervous face.

She looked like an outsider standing in the middle of a club or an introvert buried in

the crowd. Her confident movement was nowhere to be seen.

She looked awkward and scared, which was a memorable sight to behold, especially because she was Jo Hye-Jin.

'What is she doing?'

Obviously, I had to hurry up and fix her posture. When I started talking, I saw her surprised expression.

"Mic test. *Ah*. Did you commit a crime or something? Stop cowering and walk with confidence. And don't walk like a man. Walk cautiously, but do it ever so slightly. Straighten your back and walk with your chest wide open. We went through the trouble of making you look nice, so let's show it off to the guild staff members…"

"Anyway, you can hear me, right? If you can, stroke your lips once," I requested.

She could hear me.

"Good job, your posture is okay now. Don't go anywhere. Enter the Guild House right away. You're going there to do your job. Don't be nervous. Just act like you usually do. Don't expect perfection on your first attempt. Perfection does happen during first times, but they're rare," I continued.

- I-I wasn't even expecting something like that. I'm just—

"Did I say something? Anyway, try not to talk because you'll look like you're talking to the air. Now, now, don't worry about useless things and open the door. Open it and close it slowly," I ordered.

The slightly blushing Jo Hye-Jin took a deep breath and opened the door. She was moving really cautiously, but I thought she was acting that way because her target was Kim Hyun-Sung's office.

I could also see Kim Hyun-Sung through the magic hologram, and I thought he was hard at work right now, but he was doing something else.

'That bastard. Why is he looking at that shoe?'

Kim Hyun-Sung seemed anxious as he stared at a shoe on his desk.

CHAPTER 462
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (7)

'It's not like he's in Cinderella or something… '

I knew Kim Hyun-Sung had been looking for Bitcherella. I didn't hear it from someone else, but a single glance at his schedule was enough to deduce that much. He suddenly had a schedule for something else aside from training and his work, so it was easy to deduce what he had been up to.

It had been a while since he found out, but after finding out that Bitcherella had moved over to the Union of Kingdoms and was living as a wanderer, Kim Hyun-Sung barely walked outside since then.

He was finally accepting the *breakup.* Naturally, I wanted to yell in delight because the complicated situation was starting to fade away. Jo Hye-Jin was actually the finishing blow that would end the situation once and for all.

However, I could have never imagined that he would still be obsessed with that shoe.

'He really has a one-track mind.'

I wasn't certain, but I had an idea why he was obsessed with it. I was sure he was regretting his mistake rather than being interested in her. A momentary mistake had damaged a good relationship, and he thought that he needed to apologize and take responsibility for it. I wasn't sure if it were a unique habit of his, but it was undeniable that Kim Hyun-Sung was the type of person who was obsessed with fixing his mistakes.

'He shouldn't be stressing over ridiculous things… '

I was already worried about his mental health, so I obviously didn't want him to stress over other issues at an important time like this. I rubbed my temples when I saw that he was so engrossed in his thoughts that he didn't even notice Jo Hye-Jin entering his office.

'Shit.'

At this point, I was sure that Jo Hye-Jin was embarrassed. She dressed up and walked in with confident strides, but he seemed like he didn't even care about all that.

'This is going to hurt her.'

Jo Hye-Jin knew that she had changed physically, but the burden of doing something she was about to do for the first time was taking a toll on her.

She didn't say anything, but I was sure that she was excited to see Kim Hyun-Sung's reaction the moment she walked in. After all, she had always been acting like a tomboy, but she was still a woman.

Unfortunately, the radio silence from Kim Hyun-Sung instantly destroyed her confidence—no, the injury could be more severe because Jo Hye-Jin wasn't really that confident from the start.

"It's over before it even began…" Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

I couldn't help but nod at Lee Ji-Hye's comment, but I couldn't give up here.

"Miss Hye-Jin, try clearing your throat lightly and let's start by greeting him as usual," I instructed her.

-…

"Miss Hye-Jin, can you hear me?" I asked.

-…

'Shit! That damn avatar is malfunctioning!'

I thought this would happen at least once, but I could have never expected that this would happen on my very first order to her.

'Shit!'

This wasn't the worst-case scenario, but I was frustrated because I could only watch as Jo Hye-Jin slowly lost her confidence.

“I’m sure he’s thinking about something else. He hasn’t seen your face yet, so let’s focus and try again. Try clearing your throat. I’m sure he’ll react right away. Do it. Are you just going to stand there? Come on! Greet him or something!” I ordered.

- G-Guild Master…

-…

The first try was a failure.

- Guild Master?

- *Ah*, Miss Hye-Jin.

Thankfully, the second time was a success. However, it was ridiculous how he awkwardly put away the shoe in shock. Kim Hyun-Sung seemed embarrassed as well because he discreetly tried to look as if he were looking over some documents, but the most ridiculous part here was how he didn’t even mention Jo Hye-Jin’s new look.

I obviously thought that he would show some kind of reaction because his personal adjutant was wearing casual clothes rather than her usual armor. In addition, people would usually comment out of respect. Of course, I wasn’t expecting her to say that she was pretty or beautiful, but I thought he would at least say *‘your outfit is different from the usual,’* which would make us feel gratified.

Lee Ji-Hye next to me looked confused as well. Kim Hyun-Sun was acting like his usual self, and Lee Ji-Hye definitely felt like she had just gotten rejected. Jo Hye-Jin’s reaction wasn’t any different from Lee Ji-Hye's.

“Sit down for now,” I instructed her.

- S-Sit down for now.

- I’m already sitting down…

‘That crazy woman.’

“I’m not telling you to repeat every word I’m saying. Shit. Just follow my words and sit down, Miss Hye-Jin,” I explained.

- *Ah! Ah… ah!* Okay.

- Excuse me?

“I told you not to say anything, you dumbo! Are you trying to screw me over?” I said.

- It’s… nothing, Guild Master.

- As expected…

- Excuse me?

- Miss Hye-Jin…

- Yes?

‘Did he notice?’

- You look unwell. I was kind of worried because you didn’t come to the afternoon training… Are you okay? Do you have a fever? I think it’s best if you return and rest for today. I can take care of things on my own.

Things weren’t going the way I planned. Kim Hyun-Sung actually sounded like he was worried about Jo Hye-Jin, and if I were him, I would have the same thought.

The woman who usually acted perfectly was not only talking to herself, but her behavior was also completely different from her usual behavior. He was definitely thinking that there was something wrong with her mentally or perhaps she was sick.

Jo Hye-Jin was stupefied by the unexpected banishment order. I couldn’t help but bite my lips when I saw her looking straight at the camera as if she was asking me what she should do.

“Just tell him that it’s nothing and don’t show your emotion so easily like that. Sit down first and behave like you usually do. Don’t do anything else. I won’t give you any additional tasks; just complete this one for now,” I instructed her.

Thankfully, she followed my order this time.

- I’m fine. I’m not in the best condition, but I can still perform basic tasks.

- But—

- I'm really fine. More than that, I'm sorry. It's so sudden…

- No, it's fine. It's not like I can do anything since you suddenly got sick… You need rest as well, Miss Hye-Jin. By the way, do you have any plans?

'Finally.'

- I do.

- Your outfit is different from your usual outfit as well… I'm sorry if I'm being too nosy.

- N-No, it's fine.

- You look good. I'm surprised to see you like this.

- Thank you.

'This is what I'm talking about. I would have been sad if you hadn't said anything, Hyun-Sung.'

Lee Ji-Hye next to me looked relieved. However, Jo Hye-Jin was still wearing her heart on her sleeve. The way she lowered her head slightly while blushing made it look as if she had just gotten everything that she wanted.

If a third party were here, they might think that she had just gotten engaged to Kim Hyun-Sung.

"Don't be so happy at every compliment. We knew this would happen," I instructed.

It seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't as slow-witted and dense as I thought. If he hadn't mentioned Jo Hye-Jin's new outfit at all, then I would have considered him a dating psychopath.

I told her not to wear her heart on her sleeve, but Jo Hye-Jin was still smiling brightly. I thought of giving her another warning, but this wasn't so bad because it was way better than looking serious. It felt like her smile changed not only her appearance but the atmosphere as well. I couldn't help but clench my fist when I saw her sit

down with a bit of confidence before she started working on her tasks.

'Not bad.'

We hadn't really achieved anything, but it wasn't a bad start if we ignored the blunder earlier. We succeeded in raising Jo Hye-Jin's self-esteem, and we also managed to engrave a different side of Jo Hye-Jin in Kim Hyun-Sung's mind.

I had no idea what he was thinking right now, but it was undeniable that he gave a positive comment. Upon recalling Jo Hye-Jin's reaction, it was clear that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't usually compliment her like that.

It was still too early to celebrate, but the beginning had always been the hardest part when it came to succeeding in something.

Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Hyun-Sung were focused on their tasks. They weren't saying anything, and all I could hear was the sound of their pens scratching the paper.

"Stop being conscious. Act like you normally do, Miss Hye-Jin. We're doing this to see his reaction. We're trying to see if his actions will change after seeing a different side of you. We're also trying to get some information about his thoughts right now. I know it'll be difficult, but act like I'm not here. Stop being conscious," I ordered.

However, she remained unmoving.

"Talk to him like you usually do. Do some small talk. There's no reason to feel embarrassed at this point," I added.

- This is how I usually act.

Jo Hye-Jin didn't say it. She actually wrote it on a piece of paper among the pile of documents that she was working to process.

"You don't talk at all while working?" I asked.

- Our efficiency will go down if we started talking to each other.

"..."

This was more serious than I thought.

Jo Hye-Jin was definitely telling the truth because the two were engrossed in their work.

Of course, they talked once in a while, but they were useless conversations.

They were mostly either *'would you like some coffee?'* or *'please hand me that document.'*

I knew Jo Hye-Jin didn't really manage to achieve many things on her own, but the situation was worse than I thought. I felt like I had given an impossible task to a child who couldn't even walk. At this rate, we wouldn't be able to see his reaction at all.

I started to feel anxious and awkward about all this.

All I could hear was the sound of pages being flipped. The stupid woman seemed like she was happy with this deadlock, and I could see it on her face. However, I felt a sense of crisis. I felt like I had no choice but to try something different.

Therefore, I started talking cautiously. Fortunately, Jo Hye-Jin reacted immediately.

'She needs to be more aggressive.

"You still remember how you told Hyun-Sung just now that you had plans, right? If you do, nod," I told her.

-…

"Go out real quick and come back inside ten minutes later. If you look in your pocket, you'll see two tickets to the theater. Tell him that you were going to go to the theater with a friend from the Black Swan Guild, but something came up, and they had to cancel. You happen to have two tickets, so go ahead and ask him to go out with you. You can't decline this—you have to say it no matter what," I ordered.

- How can I say that to him?

"You're not asking him out on a date. It's not a date, so don't get ahead of yourself. You're not at that point yet. You just need someone to go with you because your friend canceled. Don't feel pressured. Say it as naturally as you can. I recommend acting a bit embarrassed," I advised.

- All right.

I didn't expect that I would have to use this card earlier than I thought. I was worried about Jo Hye-Jin's poor acting skills, but it should be easy for her because she was just going to tell a lie without any emotions involved.

Fortunately, it seemed like I had gotten worried for nothing because she acted more naturally than I thought to the extent that I really wanted to applaud her.

However, the issue wasn't her.

- So… I have an extra ticket. I-If you have time, would you like to watch it with me?

- A play?

- Yes. It's a popular play. The title is *The Sleeping Alchemist,* and I heard that it's popular. I also heard that a theatrical troupe is visiting the Rift Theater.

- *Ah*… that play.

- Do you know it?

'Yes, go!'

- Yes, I heard about it. I think Mr. Ki-Young told me that it looked fun, but I still have some work to do, so if you don't mind… how about you go with Mr. Ki-Young?

'Y-Y-Y-you grateful bastard who thinks of me more than anybody else!'

I felt conflicted.

CHAPTER 463
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (8)

I could remember mentioning it one time when we ate together, but I couldn't remember if I said it when it was just the two of us or when we were eating with the other guild members. I said it to break the ice, so I didn't really think too much about it.

I mean, who would remember a casual remark? People wouldn't usually think too much about a casual remark.

"Ah, I heard that play is really popular these days. I think I'm going to go watch it when I get the chance."

Obviously, I wasn't interested in that strange play because I wasn't planning on getting involved in the cultural industry. If Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't mentioned it, I wouldn't have remembered it.

'Well… I'm thankful, but this isn't right, Hyun-Sung.'

Of course, I was surprised because I wasn't expecting this to happen at all. After all, I was trying to get Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Hyun-Sung together. His words made me become confident of his feelings for me, but he had basically rejected Jo Hye-Jin's request.

His reply just now sounded like he wasn't interested in Jo Hye-Jin at all.

'He really doesn't know anything.'

I thought he was somewhat interested in her just a few minutes ago. Actually, even if he wasn't interested in her, I thought that he was finally starting to see her as a woman.

After all, the awakened Jo Hye-Jin was very beautiful, and she was like a five-star character in a Gacha game.

Of course, the unawakened Jo Hye-Jin was still charming in her own way. In addition, she had been discreetly expressing her interest in Kim Hyun-Sung all this while.

I was confident that there wasn't a man out there who would treat a woman who liked them coldly, especially when they were as beautiful and as competent as Jo Hye-Jin.

Jo Hye-Jin hadn't been expressing her feelings openly. However, there were clear signs that she had feelings for Kim Hyun-Sung, and it was the fact that she was always trying to get even closer to him.

She had also been displaying behavior that would make other women wary of approaching Kim Hyun-Sung. However, Kim Hyun-Sung had no idea that Jo Hye-Jin was conscious of him and that she had just indirectly asked him out on a date.

I had no idea what to say—I had no idea how to describe this dense jerk.

-…

Jo Hye-Jin stiffened at his unexpected answer, so I had to stay focused for her sake.

"Tell him that I have already watched it with Ha-Yan. Say that I'm the one who recommended the play to you and that I gave you the tickets. Cue," I ordered.

- The sub guild master said he already watched it with Miss Ha-Yan… and he bought the play tickets for me.

"He's almost done with his tasks, anyway. Tell him that he can finish them earlier and you two can then watch it. Tell him that he also needs to take breaks once in a while," I added.

- There aren't a lot of tasks left, so we can just wrap them up quickly. You also seem to be overdoing it a lot lately… Even if you think you're lacking, no one will criticize you, and all you've been doing recently is working and training.

She was doing better than I thought. It was kind of difficult for her, but I felt that I could give her an additional task.

"Tell him that you want to go and watch it with him."

-…

“Hurry…”

- I’d like to watch it with you, if possible.

-…

-…

‘Nice.’

There was a moment of silence.

- Well, since you said it like that… What time is the show?

However, Kim Hyun-Sung’s answer made me cheer by pumping my fists into the air.

- It starts at eight-thirty this evening.

- I should get ready now. Can you wait for me?

- Yes, o-of course.

‘Let’s gooo!’

We finally overcame the first barrier. Jo Hye-Jin looked as happy as me. For Jo Hye-Jin, this was basically a small step for man but one giant leap for mankind. It was still too early to celebrate, but it was fine for us to become happy after seeing a result.

It didn’t feel like they would go out and watch that play as a man and a woman on a date, but that didn’t really matter because I was sure that they would look like they were on a date.

I was also sure that breaking through the first barrier would make Kim Hyun-Sung put his guard down.

“I’m proud because you’re doing better than I expected. Just act like you’re acting right now,” I advised.

I saw Jo Hye-Jin nodding through the hologram.

“I think Hyun-Sung is a bit surprised because your behavior is different from usual. I can tell from his appearance and the way he’s talking… He looks indifferent, but I’m sure he’s surprised,” I added.

-…

“*Ahem*. Making him realize that you’re a woman is the top priority. I’m not insulting you, but I think Hyun-Sung still doesn’t recognize you as a woman just yet. If I had to give an example, he sees you as an adjutant, a knight, or a co-worker, so you don’t have to worry about the rejection just now. It’s not like you asked him out on a date,” I continued.

- Okay.

“I don’t have any other mission for you other than making you watch the play with him, and the issue I mentioned just now is the top priority. He has to recognize you as a woman so that you guys can start kissing and holding hands,” I told her.

-…

“Let’s think of it as a switch. We can start out by differentiating the Jo Hye-Jin of today from the usual Jo Hye-Jin at the guild. Honestly, I’ll be really satisfied as long as there aren’t any hiccups,” I said.

- *Hm*…

“There’s no need to be wary of your surroundings. You don’t have to take your weapon with you as well. Just walk next to him with that outfit. Don’t try to start with something big. Let’s start by taking baby steps. You don’t have to worry about him because we’ll be watching your surroundings. There won’t be any danger,” I assured her.

-…

Jo Hye-Jin seemed hesitant about the idea, but she ended up nodding lightly. I was sure that she was worried, but she definitely trusted me because she nodded upon hearing my confident remark.

While I was giving her basic advice, Kim Hyun-Sung was finally done getting ready.

He had changed into a comfortable outfit as well. I was worried that he was going to wear basic armor, but fortunately, he wasn't that dumb. It seemed like he thought that his outfit had to match the location.

- Let's go.

- Okay, Guild Master.

'How sweet. It's so sweet and refreshing.'

The two started walking slowly.

'Not bad.'

On the outside, they looked like a couple, and Jo Hye-Jin was carrying out the mission better than I expected.

Honestly, I was worried that she was going to walk around with her eyes wide open because I had never seen her put her guard down whenever she was with Kim Hyun-Sung.

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't really need a bodyguard. However, Jo Hye-Jin had always been insisting on becoming one, even though Kim Hyun-Sung had already told her that he didn't need a bodyguard.

Right now, she was focused on Kim Hyun-Sung without being wary of her surroundings.

They talked about many different topics while walking together. If I had to exaggerate a bit, it seemed like there was no need for me to coach her anymore. The fact that they talked about work even out here was the sad part, but it did fit their personality and site.

Of course, I stopped their conversation whenever they started talking too deeply about work. I gave Jo Hye-Jin a new topic for them to talk about. Obviously, they were all topics that Kim Hyun-Sung enjoyed talking about.

'First is equipment… '

“Now that I think about it, I heard a lot of interesting items dropped in the Rift Museum. You just need to say that, Miss Hye-Jin,” I instructed.

- Guild Master, now that I think about it, I heard that a lot of interesting items had dropped in the Rift Museum.

- Yes, I heard that as well. I heard that the party that’s becoming popular in the Republic managed to obtain an interesting item. What’s even more interesting is that it was already their second time obtaining a powerful item from the museum. I heard his name was Bark Sergei. It was a necklace last time and a sword this time… I heard that he decided to use the necklace and put up the sword for auction. I don’t know much about the sword since its functions are unknown, but…

- I heard that it’s going to be pretty expensive. It might get sold at the highest price at the auction house.

- Actually, I heard that the auction house has a new most expensive item.

- Is it a weapon?

- No, I heard it’s some kind of a limited-edition book. I don’t really know much because I’m not really interested. Anyway, about that sword…

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung was having a good time.

‘Our Hyun-Sung goes crazy over equipment.’

He was simply not using a different sword because he already had a mythic-ranked sword. It seemed like he was thinking that it wouldn’t make sense for him to use that legendary-ranked sword when he already had a mythic-ranked one.

However, I was sure that in the peaceful future, he would buy and collect every sword out there as long as he liked it. I wasn’t sure if it was because he had gotten more used to this place than Earth, but he cherished his equipment as if they were his lover.

‘Second is a car… ’

Well, they were called griffons on this continent, but griffons were one of the few things that Kim Hyun-Sung was interested in.

I became sure of it when I gifted him a cool black griffon.

He hadn't expressed it openly, but I would periodically see him changing the griffon's saddle and washing the car—I mean, washing the griffon.

He would even sometimes groom its feathers, which was a bit weird considering his personality, but it was definitely a rare sight.

My griffon Whitefall recently mated with his griffon, and Whitefall laid an egg. I could still remember vividly how happy Kim Hyun-Sung was when he heard the news.

He was so happy to the extent that I could say with confidence that it had been the most expressive he had been all this time.

Cross-breeding was nearly impossible for griffons, but they succeeded in natural breeding, so it could be considered a miracle. Therefore, I could understand why he was so happy. However, the expression I saw on him that day made him look like an otaku—an otaku who wanted to fanboy over it.

Griffons were a great topic to talk about, especially when one's conversation partner was Kim Hyun-Sung.

There weren't many things that Kim Hyun-Sung liked, but there were a few things that brought him joy, and I was sure that Jo Hye-Jin could feel it right now more than anyone else.

It was all because Kim Hyun-Sung would always talk more than usual whenever the topic was something he liked.

- When I used to live in Lindel before you came…

Kim Hyun-Sung would also start talking about the past.

'I'm sure she's really thankful.'

After all, I was the only one who knew the keyword that would pique his interest.

I started nodding when I noticed that he was giving her a lot more information than I expected. Lee Ji-Hye was coaching Jo Hye-Jin on what kind of expression she should have while talking so the latter didn't look awkward at all.

I wasn't sure what Kim Hyun-Sung was thinking right now, but he was definitely something along the lines of…

'So Jo Hye-Jin has this side… '

I was sure that it was a sight that he didn't get to see in his past life because he was too busy. I would call this a success. The atmosphere between them was great while they were watching the strange play with a weird story that I couldn't remember anymore.

After desperately convincing him, Jo Hye-Jin succeeded in taking him to a wine bar, and I couldn't help but exclaim in delight.

Obviously, they were talking about the play. The more memories they shared together, the easier it would be for them to talk to each other. It was a plain and simple conversation, but everyone seemed happy.

I clenched my fists when I saw that they already drank about two glasses of wine. It was all because I was about to use a card, which was a tradition that had helped many people transition from being friends into couples.

'Oppa, I think I'm kind of drunk.'

I wasn't expecting results right away. I just wanted Kim Hyun-Sung to recognize that Jo Hye-Jin was a woman who had to be protected as well. I thought everything was going as planned, but I couldn't help but gulp because of his unexpected reaction.

Seeing Jo Hye-Jin's red face, Kim Hyun-Sung immediately called the guild.

- I'll call a female staff member here. I think you're already drunk, Miss Hye-Jin.

For some reason, he looked determined.

'Shit… Don't do that, man. You weren't supposed to do that.'

It seemed that Kim Hyun-Sung had gotten traumatized after being backstabbed by that mysterious bitch.

CHAPTER 464
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (9)

The historical first night out ended just like that. Actually, it ended kind of tragically. Jo Hye-Jin told him that she was fine and that she could walk on her own.

She also tried to stop him from contacting the guild, but she couldn't stop the determined Kim Hyun-Sung. Soon, the security guards of the guild arrived and took the drunk Jo Hye-Jin home.

Kim Hyun-Sung walked a few steps behind her because he seemed worried about making unintentional physical contact, which gave me a headache. I was sure that he had gotten traumatized after being backstabbed by that mysterious bitch.

'Who the hell is she… '

One of the most powerful tools I had at my disposal was now useless. Subtle physical contact was tremendously effective in making a man and a woman become even closer to each other. Obviously, physical contact without consent would make people a molester, but it wasn't like Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin hated each other.

'It's not like they don't know each other either… '

Physical contact like touching each other's shoulder lightly or lightly touching the back of each other's hands as they swayed their arms while walking were ways to create intense sexual tension between a man and a woman.

Back on Earth, the cheesy and cliche method of touching each other's hands while eating popcorn never actually worked.

Honestly, at their age, they could drink, make a *mistake*, and then start dating.

Those steps often started by becoming a bit closer and rapidly developing their relationship after some kissing. We could use the same method, but I couldn't imagine them doing that, so small events like the above were important.

It wasn't much, but light physical contact was important when seducing Kim Hyun-Sung because it would make him realize that Jo Hye-Jin was a woman, but that method was useless now.

'That's one method down the drain.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was also carefully watching Jo Hye-Jin, so that method was out of the question. In addition, Kim Hyun-Sung's monster-like reflexes didn't allow even the tiniest non-consensual collision of shoulders or even a light touch at the back of their hands.

'This is wrong… '

Of course, it wasn't like they didn't have a good time today. We used all sorts of excuses to drag Kim Hyun-Sung to the field, and they actually enjoyed their time together a lot.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung didn't invade Jo Hye-Jin's personal space, and the latter was obviously not allowed to enter his personal space as well. He would even take a step back whenever they got too close to each other, and he also made a conscious decision to avoid getting *too* close to her.

To make things worse, whenever Jo Hye-Jin tried to discreetly get close to him, Kim Hyun-Sung would use magic to dodge.

He was actively avoiding Jo Hye-Jin as if she had leprosy.

Fortunately, Jo Hye-Jin seemed like she wasn't offended or hurt at all. It made sense because, for her, physical contact was something that should be done after becoming a couple, so I knew that she wouldn't really be hurt by Kim Hyun-Sung's avoidance.

If a miracle were to happen and they ended up together, I was sure that she would remain a virgin until marriage—probably unintentionally.

Aside from the physical contact, all this was only made possible because Jo Hye-Jin didn't just stand idly by.

It was rare for her to stay up late with Kim Hyun-Sung after going to a theater, and they started meeting up often after work after their first night out, so I was sure that she was overjoyed by the development.

She even thanked me personally, but I wasn't really happy about the situation.

'Hyun-Sung… I thought she could seduce him with one finger… '

It worked for Bitch Ki-Yeon, and if I were to exaggerate a bit, Bitch Ki-Yeon could probably seduce him with her toes. However, the large castle wall that suddenly grew as tall as a mountain was truly impregnable.

They looked like they were getting along really well on the outside, but there weren't any tangible results. Lee Ji-Hye had tried controlling the avatar herself, but it got even worse. Jo Hye-Jin was all smiles, but the atmosphere in the control room had soured.

She was so happy, so I felt bad for saying that there was no hope.

I thought we would be able to complete the mission in a short amount of time, but this would definitely take at least ten years. Of course, I wasn't really in a hurry because my goal had always been to make Kim Hyun-Sung take a break, and he had a good break.

'The problem is that he didn't show any interest in Jo Hye-Jin.'

The forced task I had given Jo Hye-Jin involved dragging Kim Hyun-Sung out of the training hall and the office. It was a bit uncomfortable for me to say that we had forced him, but we had succeeded in making him relax.

Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Hyun-Sung even spent their time at a cafe, watched another play again, visited the auction house, and they had even spent all their money at the casino.

I was worried that he would get stressed, but it seemed that he was also a human because the activities lifted his mood and made him happier. He had also stopped being obsessed with the shoe.

In other words, we were having trouble with the side quest, but the main quest was progressing smoothly.

I couldn't give an exact diagnosis, but it seemed that the fogginess in Kim Hyun-Sung's head was slowly disappearing. I was concerned about him, so there had been times when I had to step in and check if he was doing fine.

Obviously, I kept on complimenting Jo Hye-Jin's appearance whenever I was with Kim Hyun-Sung because I was still eager to complete the side quests.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like the demon was still in his head, but he trusted me a lot, so I was confident that my words would influence him somewhat. Unfortunately, I wasn't really sure if my words were effective.

It had been a long time since I had fun with him, and he was also starting to get used to the idea of taking breaks.

'Yeah, rest while you can. Resting is a good thing, Hyun-Sung.'

Things would only get busier from now on, and I would soon lose the luxury of providing fresh oxygen to his exhausted brain.

I created a festival of griffons on the continent and sent him there with Ji Hye-Jin. I owned a griffon, so Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he wanted me to go with him. However, I didn't have the time to enjoy a festival.

The big festival displayed griffon saddles, accessories, and items related to griffons, and many people participated in various competitions.

I created this festival using the money I didn't really own just for Kim Hyun-Sung's sake, but the people reacted better than I thought, so I actually profited overall.

Of course, the festival had a bigger impact on Kim Hyun-Sung. I wasn't sure if the griffon festival sparked something in him, but he started taking breaks of his own will.

It didn't mean that he had gone completely out of control. By my standards, his willingness still wasn't enough, but in his eyes, I was sure that he had changed a lot.

In addition, everyone in the Blue Guild kept on suggesting that he took a break, and whenever I had time, I also made sure to tell him the importance of taking a break. I intentionally spent more time with him, and I also included Jo Hye-Jin in our meetings.

At first, Kim Hyun-Sung was hesitant about the concept of taking breaks, but he had to have realized that I was right because he had become a bit more aggressive when it came to having fun.

He had become more relaxed, and the sense of urgency in his expression couldn't be seen anymore. It was such a drastic change that even I was amazed. I was sure that he was finally aware of the importance of taking breaks.

I wasn't that knowledgeable about swords, so I wasn't really familiar with them, but Kim Hyun-Sung seemed like he had a tiny goal that he wanted to achieve.

Naturally, a great sword couldn't be made if one were to hammer away without much thought. The process also involved meticulous and careful quenching. Anyway, it was a slow process, and I thought that Kim Hyun-Sung had to slow down as well.

It was just my personal assumption, but I thought that if I hadn't intervened and forced him to take breaks, he may have shattered sooner or later. Therefore, it was better to take a step back and take things slowly rather than in a hurry.

After all, consistently doing the latter meant that one would be prone to burnout.

'But why am I... '

"..."

'But why am I... shit...!'

For some reason, I was getting busier. I had been preaching about the importance of taking breaks, but I couldn't take a break myself because I had a knack and the urge to get things done.

Of course, I also took breaks whenever I got the chance, but I still had a ton of work.

My biggest everyday task was creating a schedule for Kim Hyun-Sung to enjoy. The griffon festival gave me a ton of work. I gave our subcontractors overtime pay, but I still had a ton of paperwork to process.

This meant that just because I wanted a festival to happen didn't mean that it would happen just like that. Therefore, I had to stay up late just to make sure that I would process the documents in time.

Whenever I woke up the next day, I would feel even more tired than yesterday. My body was clearly telling me that I was tired.

For some reason, Jung Ha-Yan seemed like she was becoming more and more energetic as time went on, so I had to drink rejuvenating potions just to make sure that I wouldn't collapse out of exhaustion.

In addition to processing a ton of paperwork, I also had to control my avatar, Jo Hye-Jin.

I also had to prepare for the upcoming threat, so it wasn't strange that I was tired.

As usual, I made sure to meet Father Basel as well as my maid Aris—no, Oscar. I also met with the senators to consult them about what they thought of certain ideas.

Of course, I met with Jung Ha-Yan and Cha Hee-Ra whenever I had time, and I also took care of Elena, who was starting to adapt to the way of living in the Blue Guild.

Smartie, Dialugia, and Max also needed my attention, so I spent time with them as well.

In some ways, meeting other people could be considered a break, but I didn't think that it was true in my case.

Playing with Smartie could never be considered a break. Even worse, Smartie was also starting to express her strange ambition once again. Moreover, trying to maintain a balance between Jung Ha-Yan and Cha Hee-Ra was extremely exhausting.

Dialugia and I were also at odds with each other on certain topics, and it was also tiring to deal with her. However, I didn't really mind doing all this work because the more I worked, the faster the continent would develop.

The foundation of the continent's joint training was set, and the date had already been decided as well.

We were also preparing to accept new recruits.

The many nations of the continent were signing agreements with each other, and the military provisions and funds of every nation also increased as the continent became more unified.

Of course, not every issue had been resolved, but the foundation was already established, which was great. Obviously, I still had to know Kim Hyun-Sung's opinion

about all this.

During all this, I got frustrated and decided to visit Kasugano Yuno, but I didn't really get that much information from her.

I did *see* many things, but the scenes were mostly me torturing her again and again to the point that even Kasugano Yuno couldn't help but feel embarrassed about what we were doing. The scenes also revealed my hookups with many different women.

Overall, the Dark World wasn't helpful this time. Even worse, I even got together with Sun Hee-Young of the brigade, who was basically a stranger to me, and the scenes were so explicit that my nose actually started bleeding.

Overall, it wasn't a total miss because useless information was still *information*. I managed to extract more details about Sun Hee-Young and the brigade. Aside from a few incidents, it felt like all the ships had sailed.

Unfortunately, some ships ended up sinking…

'Like our Jo Hye-Jin… '

Hye-Jin Coin's value was plummeting…

"Sub Guild Master, I-I think… I think it's about time we move on to the next step," Jo Hye-Jin suggested carefully.

However, her words sounded like a load of nonsense to me.

'Are people still investing in Hye-Jin Coin? There aren't any more investors, right?'

I shook my head at her surprising remark.

"I think it's best if you confess," I suggested.

CHAPTER 465
JO HYE-JIN INSTRUCTION MANUAL (10)

'Did she eat something bad?'

I couldn't help but think that way because I had never imagined Jo Hye-Jin taking the initiative. I could feel that she had been kind of proactive lately, and it was actually noticeable because she had always been passive when it came to something like this.

Of course, it wasn't like I couldn't understand her at all. She often acted like a tomboy, but she was still a woman. I knew that it had to have been hard for her to take the initiative.

Anyway, she liked Kim Hyun-Sung, and she had been recently going on *dates* with him.

Honestly, I didn't really consider their excursions as dates, but I was sure that it was like a dream come true for her, so I understood why she wanted to take a step forward. I was certain that she was finding it increasingly difficult to hide her feelings, and at this point, it had most likely become a struggle.

It wasn't really strange because that usually happened whenever one had a crush on someone. Of course, people who weren't picky about their dates and people who were popular enough to have many dating partners wouldn't understand Jo Hye-Jin.

Jo Hye-Jin had to be feeling frustrated. I was sure that she could see Kim Hyun-Sung's face everywhere, even as she lay in bed and was about to sleep. I reckoned that she would think of Hyun-Sung even during mealtimes as well.

She wanted to express her feelings, but she was the type of person who could easily fall in danger because she was thinking that her frustration would be assuaged by confessing.

'Confession is a confirmation, not a challenge, Hye-Jin.'

More than seventy percent of those who struggled to confess would end up

spectacularly failing in their confession. Confession was a confirmation of one's feelings to someone else, and to be honest…

'She's an adult… '

I didn't get into a relationship with Jung Ha-Yan, Cha Hee-Ra, Elena, and Lee Ji-Hye by telling them 'do you want to go out with me? Today is our first day as a couple, okay?!'

Upon reaching a certain age, people tend to exclude that process. It could be a bit early, but at Jo Hye-Jin's age, she should have done that. She should have naturally held his hands and started kissing him as though it was natural. Of course, she could have gone all the way with him as well.

By the end of all that, they could then confess their feelings to each other, and they would naturally be in a relationship. Of course, there were people who got into relationships by saying 'I think I like you, let's date?'

However, those who would put both their heart and soul into a confession like Jo Hye-Jin were rare.

I was against this kind of confession because their relationship was a bit questionable. I told her indirectly that it wasn't a good idea, but Jo Hye-Jin looked like she wasn't going to back down.

'What if this makes them grow further apart?'

I couldn't help but think that way. I was confident when I dispatched Jo Hye-Jin to the battlefield, but now, I wasn't that confident anymore. I had decided to help her because I thought they looked good together, and they also knew each other in their past lives.

Unfortunately, this war was already over, and it ended in our defeat.

No matter which angle I used to look at it, Kim Hyun-Sung couldn't think of Jo Hye-Jin as a woman. I had no idea what was going to happen in the future, but the conclusion was exactly like that. It was also the current situation.

Therefore, I had no choice but to hurry up and intervene because I didn't want her to get hurt. It was unlike me to do something like that, but I actually felt bad about

using an innocent person to help Hyun-Sung rest.

“W-What’s up with the sudden idea? I honestly think it’s too early…”

“I just… think that it’s the right time,” Jo Hye-Jin answered.

‘What do you mean it’s the right time? You’re just frustrated.’

“What do you mean? We haven’t even done anything. I’m sorry to tell you this, but I think we should wait a bit longer. I’m kind of busy right now, and rather than confessing to him, I think it’s better for you to maintain your relationship with him and then tell him about your feelings later down the road. He’ll naturally grow fonder of you if you two keep seeing each other like this. Things will fall into place naturally…” I suggested.

“Still—”

“Think of the bigger picture and don’t do anything stupid. From the start—”

“No, I think it’s best if I tell him right now. I feel like it’ll help both the guild master and myself. I think it’s the right thing to do, no matter the possible results. And I’m not here to get your permission, I’m just here to inform you. I’m thankful for everything you’ve done for me, but from now on, I’ll do it my way,” she interrupted me.

‘What’s wrong with you?’

Jo Hye-Jin looked like she wanted to put an end to all this because things were about to get hectic. Perhaps she wanted to settle all this, regardless of the results, so that she could focus on her work.

I honestly had no idea what she was thinking, but I could see that her mindset had changed drastically. At first, she kept on denying her feelings, but now, it was clear that she had already accepted her feelings.

She had been suppressing the urge to confess, but it seemed that she had realized that it was about time for her to do something.

In her past life, I was sure that she had kept her feelings to herself because she didn’t really manage to get in the position to confess.

Moreover, it was also possible that Kim Hyun-Sung was seeing someone else, and in a world where survival was the top priority, I was sure that they didn't have the luxury of a serious relationship.

I was sure that she had only acknowledged her feelings back then when she was on the brink of death.

However, the current Jo Hye-Jin was a bit different from the Jo Hye-Jin of our past lives.

I was certain that she had made this decision after agonizing about it for quite a while now while thinking of Kim Hyun-Sung as a member of the opposite sex rather than her superior.

Of course, she might have also realized that Kim Hyun-Sung had no feelings for her and decided that it would be best to wrap this up as soon as possible.

At first, I thought her remark was ridiculous, but when I thought about it, Jo Hye-Jin's decision matched her personality. She was stupid, stubborn, and honest. She knew that her chances were low and that she would get hurt, but she was stubborn.

And her stubbornness to walk on the thorny path was what brought her this far…

'I can't stop her… '

In the end, I had no choice but to say something…

"Do whatever you want, but all the help I've given you up until now will go to waste… There's a possibility that if we wait a bit—Actually, now that I think about it, there's no guarantee that your attempt will fail. If things go well, I'll congratulate you."

"If that happens, I'll come and tell you," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"I'm sure it'll work out," I told her.

"All right."

'Yeah, there's no guarantee that she'll fail.'

It was a bit surprising, but Kim Hyun-Sung had a tender side. Jo Hye-Jin was

charming as a woman as well, so rejecting her would be a stupid thing to do.

The continent didn't mind polygamy anyway, and it wasn't like she would ruin her relationship with him by not allowing him to have a relationship with other women.

'Alright, Hye-Jin. Let's gooo! Hye-Jin Coin to the moon!'

"When are you going to tell him?" I asked.

"Right now," she answered.

"…"

"I'm asking out of curiosity, but was there a change in your mindset?" I asked.

"Kind of, but I can't tell you the details. It's embarrassing, and I haven't really organized my thoughts just yet… Honestly, I've been having lots of fun thanks to you, but it felt kind of unfair. Most importantly, I just had a feeling that I should tell him as soon as possible because I can't keep spending time with him like this," she replied.

"That's true," I commented.

"The joint training is coming up. We'll get a lot busier by then, so I think it's about time we put an end to all this. Thank you for everything," she continued.

'Don't thank me. I actually feel really bad.'

"You don't have to thank me. I just did it so that everyone can be happy," I told her.

"It may have been unintentional, but if it wasn't for you, I'm sure I would have never become courageous enough to confess my feelings to him," she said.

'That's true, but damn it… it's still too sudden.'

"Well, then…"

"I'm sure you'll succeed, Miss Hye-Jin," I cheered.

"Thank you."

Jo Hye-Jin finally started heading outside after telling me her plan.

I told myself that it wasn't right for me to peek and eavesdrop, but I checked on her anyway and saw her heading toward the indoor garden behind the tourney hall. The indoor garden had to be their meeting place. On the outside, Jo Hye-Jin looked determined. She was wearing makeup and was wearing a nice outfit as well.

In addition, she hadn't received any help from Lee Ji-Hye or me today.

'She does look pretty.'

She took a deep breath in front of the indoor garden, and when she entered, I turned off the magic hologram because I felt guilty. For some reason, I found it cringey to watch other people desperately confessing their feelings to someone else. Of course, the biggest reason was that I thought that it would be rude. I wasn't usually like this, but I had a feeling that I shouldn't watch what was about to happen.

'I wonder if she'll succeed… '

The chances were honestly low, but at this point, I was hoping that things would go well for her. Kim Hyun-Sung was doing better, but he would do even better if Jo Hye-Jin stood next to him. They also looked good together, and their personalities were similar.

I started to get nervous.

'I hope it's going well… '

Otherwise, I would feel really bad. I would look like someone who had destroyed their peaceful lives. Of course, Jo Hye-Jin ignored my advice and made the final decision, but I was still the one who started all this.

'She should have just listened… '

We were definitely not compatible. She would often disobey my orders, and she was honestly uncomfortable to be around, but I couldn't say that I disliked her. After all, even the masked scum in the Dark World told her this…

"I honestly liked you."

To be honest, it was a bit funny that I was worried about her, but Jo Hye-Jin wasn't the only person whom I had grown fond of. I had also grown fond of everyone else in the guild.

Time went on as I anxiously waited for her. I wasn't even sure how long it had been since she entered the indoor garden. At this point, I already had an idea about what had happened, so I decided to go to the indoor garden.

I inwardly started using curse words that Light Ki-Young shouldn't even be familiar with, and it didn't take me long to reach the indoor garden. I saw Jo Hye-Jin when I opened the door, but Kim Hyun-Sung was nowhere to be found.

Jo Hye-Jin's confidence was nowhere to be found as well.

She looked like she was crying.

'Hey, don't cry… '

To be exact, she was about to cry.

"P-Please don't cry. Please…" I mumbled.

However, people would usually cry when they were comforted, so she started crying when I mumbled. When I started patting her shoulder, she hugged me tightly. She wasn't crying out loud, but I could hear her sobbing.

"…"

'Stop crying, damn it… I'll make sure you end up with Hyun-Sung. Little strokes fell great oaks, after all.'

"*Sniff!*"

'Hyun-Sung, you cold-hearted bastard… You should have just accepted her confession.'

I cursed him inwardly, but I respected his decision.

I was embarrassed, so I continued patting Jo Hye-Jin's shoulder. She cried for quite a while before letting me go. Three minutes after she stopped crying, I started talking to break the ice and the awkwardness surrounding us.

“Do you regret it?”

“No. *Hiccup*… I feel conflicted,” Jo Hye-Jin replied.

“See? You should have waited a bit,” I said.

“I understand what you’re saying, but I wanted to tell him myself because I thought that it was the right thing to do. Anyway, it’s all over now,” she said.

‘It’s not over. Just you wait, Hye-Jin.’

“Anyway… let’s head back. Thank you for comforting me,” she added.

‘I’ll get you and Hyun-Sung together if it’s the last thing I do. Shit… ’

“How about we get some rum?” I suggested.

“Yeah, let’s do that. I need a drink,” she replied.

It could be just my imagination, but I thought I knew why she had suddenly acted like this.

She might have finally decided to let go of herself.

She had been spending more time wearing pretty clothes rather than her usual armor, and her hand had been spending more time carrying around a small bag rather than a spear. Her tied-up hair had also become lengthy and wavy hair.

We started walking away, and I saw her tying her hair. The hairstyle didn’t really fit her current outfit, but it was the perfect hairstyle for Jo Hye-Jin.

I became even more confident of my assumption that she had done all this because she felt that it was about time to stop. She might have also been afraid that she would become lazy or change for the worse because of the breaks and leisurely activities that she had been enjoying all this while.

Therefore, I was certain that she had made the decision to end all this because she thought that she had to go back to her post and start doing her job once again.

I was sure of it…

She wanted to put an end to this break, and the only way she could end it all was by confessing to Kim Hyun-Sung.

I couldn't help but nod because I felt like I also had to return to my post and start doing my job once again.

"It's over…" I mumbled.

"Excuse me?" she asked.

"I didn't say it to you. I was talking to myself," I replied.

The break was over, and those who could fight started to gather.

CHAPTER 466
CONTINENTAL JOINT TRAINING (1)

“Does that mean that all forces on the continent will gather?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“I don’t think that’s going to be realistic. The participants of the joint training will just be the large clans and clans of the continent’s many nations…”

”In other words, the participants are the three large guilds of Lindel. Yozora in Celia, Cheon Kwan-Wi and Yu-Ran’s guild in Dawan. Of course, the Eight Seats of the Sacred Democratic Country will participate as well…”

“Naturally, the Republic, the Union of Kingdoms, as well as other medium and small nations will also send their own elite armed groups,” I explained.

“It seems the scale is bigger than what we can imagine,” Park Deok-Gu remarked.

“It’ll be bigger than what you’ve been imagining, Deok-Gu,” I told him.

“*Hm*.”

“We might meet resistance if only the large guilds gather, so even if they’re not one of the top guilds or clans, it’s better if a few guilds and clans with a decent amount of members join the joint training as well. We also have to take care of the armed groups of the other nations,” I continued.

“I see, so that’s why you’re really busy these days,” he said.

There was actually a different reason that took up a lot of my time, but overall, the matters related to the Continental Joint Training took a good amount of my time as well. It was difficult to select the right person.

Originally, Oscar and the senators of the Sacred Democratic Country were supposed to make the decision, but since I had a close relationship with the authoritative figures of this country, I had to give my opinion as well.

I had to sort the list of mid-sized clans within the Sacred Democratic Country, and from the list, I had to select the ones that would work well with the Blue Guild.

I did feel guilty about using other people for their skills, but it couldn't be helped. If two people with similar frames and skills stood before me, I would prefer the one who was easier to control.

The gathering was too huge for it to be considered simple joint training. However, the gathering would also be a chance to obtain huge benefits as well as address the complaints about how the three large guilds were enjoying special treatment.

Aside from that one clan that had no connections to me whatsoever, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that every clan here had some kind of connection with me.

'I don't want to make this difficult.'

I glanced outside and saw Jo Hye-Jin guarding a carriage while riding her unicorn. Kim Hyun-Sung was riding his own griffon next to Jo Hye-Jin, and the two were talking to each other.

I felt kind of relieved because they didn't look as awkward as I initially thought. I thought his rejection would affect her mental state, but she looked fine. The two had to have agreed to forget the incident.

'It's nice that she's not holding a grudge.'

I was really relieved because even after Kim Hyun-Sung's rejection, I still saw them together pretty often. I was worried because they had gone back to how they were before, and her blue armor was bothering me as well, but…

'It's fine as long as everything is fine.'

It wasn't the most ideal result, but it wasn't the worst one either because we were able to succeed in our original plan of making Kim Hyun-Sung take a break. I wasn't sure whether it was an awakening or if he had obtained something that only appeared in a martial arts novel, but he seemed more relaxed than before, and that was all that mattered.

I nodded with satisfaction to myself, and Park Deok-Gu started talking again.

“By the way, hyung-nim, don’t you think there’s something strange going on between Hye-Jin noonim and our bro recently?”

‘He’s so quick-witted.’

“I can’t really describe it, but I have a feeling that something big happened between them. I just have this feeling in my gut. I didn’t really feel this way back then, and this strange feeling started after you drank with her last week,” he continued.

‘Shit… At this point, maybe I should leave it to him.’

My instincts were telling me that he would succeed in getting those two together.

He didn’t seem all that trustworthy because he had been calling himself Gangwon Province’s Love Doctor, and he often talked nonsense, but the fact that he managed to notice the subtle changes between Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin, I couldn’t help but feel that he would be able to achieve something.

Jung Ha-Yan and I got even closer because of his help. Honestly, I really wanted to send him over to Jo Hye-Jin right now, but…

‘Now isn’t the time… ’

I didn’t want to mess up Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin’s current relationship because they were still trying to stabilize their current relationship.

“Stop thinking about ridiculous things and focus on the training, Deok-Gu. You’ve improved a lot compared to before, but I think you know better than anyone that you’re still lacking,” I told him.

“…”

‘Don’t give me that look… ’

I glanced at him and saw that he looked like a puppy that had been abandoned by its owner. In the end, I had no choice but to comfort him again.

“So, how have you been doing?” I asked.

“*Ahem*. Well… you know me. I’m always doing my best, but…” Park Deok-Gu

answered.

“But?” I asked.

“Recently, I feel like I’ve hit a wall. No matter what I do, I can’t feel any changes, and I’ve been asking around, but I don’t feel like I’ve been growing recently,” he replied.

“What about the advanced magic operation knowledge? I think you can still grow in that area,” I pointed out.

“It’s difficult… I asked Hye-Jin noonim and Ye-Ri, but I couldn’t understand them, and I’m a bit embarrassed to say this, but I think I’m not that good at magic. Of course, I’m still working on it,” he explained.

‘Obviously… ’

Unlike Kim Hyun-Sung and Kim Ye-Ri, he was close to the limit of his growth. He was still a useful legendary-ranked tank, but it would be difficult for him to grow drastically at this point.

His magic stat was low, so it was naturally hard for him to comprehend advanced magic knowledge. Even worse, the limit of that stat was his limit as a high-ranking adventurer. I thought it would be better for Park Deok-Gu to take advantage of artifacts and external elements rather than forcing himself to go beyond his limits and grow.

It was kind of sad, but it wasn’t bad. After all, he was still a legendary-ranked tank, which was amazing.

Of course, I also wasn’t really expecting him to play the same role as Kim Hyun-Sung or Kim Ye-Ri.

“I think our bro changed. I asked him about what happened, but I couldn’t understand what he was saying. This is really interesting. We both wield a sword, but the way we handle it is different. I swing my sword with no sense of understanding, but our bro is different,” Park Deok-Gu commented.

“What do you mean?” I asked.

“It feels like he actually understands the sword technique he’s using—like every

sword stroke is full of knowledge and intricacies. The best way to describe it would be to say that he's capable of fully assimilating the knowledge that people would obtain whenever they change jobs or whenever they obtain attributes. He can turn it into his own as well," he replied.

"I know what you're saying," I commented.

It was the same as the difference between me and Jung Ha-Yan. I could treat a spell as a skill and cast it just like that, but there was a difference between casting a spell as if it were just a skill compared to casting it with a complete understanding of the spell.

'That's what you call talent… '

A modern person wouldn't know anything about swords or magic. Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Hyun-Sung were special beings.

I couldn't help but be curious if Jung Ha-Yan had experienced an awakening as well.

"What about you, Ha-Yan?" I asked.

"E-Excuse me?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"Have you ever felt like you've skipped a step?" I asked.

"*Ah!* Yes, o-of course. I-I can't really describe what it feels like, but… I felt something tickling down here, and as that tickling feeling traveled to the top of my head, I felt like something exploded. *Boom! Boom! Booom!*" Jung Ha-Yan stuck close to me as she spoke, "My mind went blank, and I started trembling… I felt my eyes rolling back to my skull, and for an instant—no, for a few hours, I felt like I became an idiot… When I recovered, I realized that my magic had increased tremendously."

"Interesting…" I commented.

I would never feel that in my lifetime because ordinary people would never experience something like that.

"What about you, Miss Elena?" I asked.

"My experience was a bit different from Miss Ha-Yan's. It was after I met God that I felt like I had gotten stronger. I felt like I had gotten struck by lightning, and during

that stupor, I saw God. It felt like he had granted me a holy power that was overflowing with benevolence and love," Elena answered.

'I met Benigoa face-to-face, and I haven't experienced any awakening or whatever. Actually, I did receive holy power… '

I finally realized that there was a reason why alchemists were considered a non-combatant job. An alchemist's job was to manufacture items and potions. Of course, alchemists were different from blacksmiths like Yoo Ah-Young.

An awakening wasn't necessary to use alchemy summoning magic. It was just a skill that required spending a ton of gold. My potion series, which took care of my livelihood, would increase one's magic, but it couldn't increase skill efficiency.

'At least my job is a Semi-Mythic rank job… '

Otherwise, I would have been making potions all day rather than sitting among these monsters.

While I was having different thoughts, I stared alternatingly between Elena and Jung Ha-Yan in the carriage with me. The carriage, which was traveling in the right direction, suddenly stopped, which prompted Han Sora and Sun Hee-Young to look at me quietly.

'We shouldn't have arrived yet… '

"Deok-Gu, find out what's—"

"Got it," Park Deok-Gu interrupted.

Park Deok-Gu was close to the rear of the carriage, so he quickly went outside to figure out what was going on.

Meanwhile, Sun Hee-Young spoke cautiously, "Did something happen?"

'Why is she getting prettier?'

I blushed when I suddenly recalled what we had done in the Dark World.

"No, I don't think so… I think there's an accident up ahead," I replied.

“Wouldn’t it be better to cast a protection spell?” she asked.

“I don’t think that’s necessary,” I replied.

Park Deok-Gu started knocking on the carriage.

“Hyung-nim,” he called out.

“Is there a monster?” I asked.

“No, it’s nothing like that. I think there’s a bit of a traffic jam because of the people from many different nations and cities. The entrance is small, so they can’t enter at once. I think a large guild of the Union of Kingdoms and a large guild from the northern region of the continent got involved in a vehicular accident,” he answered.

“…”

“…”

“What are the guards doing?” I asked.

“It seems like they’re working with the people from the other nations… I’m sure the situation will improve if we just wait,” he said.

“What do you mean *wait*?” I said.

“*Huh?*”

“There’s no need to wait,” I told him.

“Then…”

“Just raise our banner and charge toward the entrance,” I instructed him.

“The entrance is completely blocked right now, so I don’t think we can do that…” he muttered.

“Forget it. I’ll go out there myself. Let’s head outside. I think it’ll be better if we get out and walk the rest of the way,” I suggested.

“Okay, oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan answered.

“All right, Sub Guild Master.”

I actually started feeling like I was suffocating inside the carriage.

When I exited the carriage, there was a lot of commotion in the surroundings.

The soldiers were trying to find out what was going on at the entrance.

Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin were talking to each other.

It seemed like they didn’t even think about just charging toward the entrance.

I could understand why Kim Hyun-Sung would think that way, but I had never imagined that Jo Hye-Jin would think that way as well. After all, she was a citizen of a country in the East, which was full of hospitable but unyielding people.

“Deok-Gu, raise our banner,” I ordered.

People started looking at us from all directions…

CHAPTER 467
CONTINENTAL JOINT TRAINING (2)

'We're too important to wait like this.'

The fact that we were a strong guild within the Sacred Democratic Country was enough for us to cut the line. The Sacred Democratic Country possessed the strongest adventurers throughout the continent, and it was also the most powerful nation.

The only reason the Union of Kingdoms and the many other small and medium-sized nations decided to participate in the joint training was to keep the Republic and the Sacred Democratic Country in check.

Of course, it was already too obvious who was more powerful between the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic. In addition, Rift Land also made the Blue Guild's stock prices go to the moon.

The Blue Guild had become no different from a large company, considering the Blue Guild's influence on external matters, funds, and the Blue Guild's overall ability to run a business.

There were even some jokes about how the entire continent would be affected if the Blue Guild decided to exit the potion-making industry. There were even more ridiculous rumors, like how Lindel would fall if the Blue Guild were to fall.

Still, the fact that these jokes and rumors existed meant that the Blue Guild's position in society could be easily deduced. The rumors and jokes were a bit exaggerated, but they weren't wrong.

Of course, the rumor about how Lindel would fall if the Blue Guild were to fall was the part that was a bit exaggerated.

Actually, the reason why the continent had its attention on us was because of the power that the Blue Guild possessed as a lone entity. After all, power was the most important thing on the continent. There was a limit, but Kim Hyun-Sung, the Guild

Master of the Blue Guild, had a mythic-ranked artifact.

In addition, the skill that he had displayed during the war with the Republic was enough to make anyone's jaws drop.

I had heard that a group of gossipers had ranked Kim Hyun-Sung as an SSS-Ranked character, like the rank that they had given to Mercenary Queen Cha Hee-Ra. Actually, they gave him a better evaluation than Cha Hee-Ra because he could maintain his sanity despite his overwhelming process, unlike Cha Hee-Ra.

Of course, Cha Hee-Ra and Kim Hyun-Sung didn't really care about the rumors, but I honestly thought that Kim Hyun-Sung was at least as strong as Cha Hee-Ra. Actually, he might be stronger than her.

The other guild members received high evaluations as well. Tanks were already pretty rare, so Park Deok-Gu was bound to have a high evaluation despite his weak attack power. Therefore, he was widely acclaimed to be the strongest tank.

The prices of Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Ye-Ri Coin were bullish as well.

Unfortunately, the prices of Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora Coin were starting to drop because they hadn't done much in the war against the Republic. However, their prices were relatively stable because they were known as one of the Heroes of Laios.

Meanwhile, Elena was evaluated as an SS-Ranked priest because she could cast and maintain buffs on an entire army.

As for Hwang Jung-Yeon, who was Park Deok-Gu's girlfriend, and Ahn Ki-Mo, whom I had no choice but to trust. They were evaluated based on the fact that they were flexible figures that could fill many roles that the Blue Guild's main party might lack.

'Sun Hee-Young has become pretty famous as well… '

In addition, Lee Chang-Ryeol and Yoo Ah-Young had grown so much that they could no longer be ignored.

The actual size of the guild was no different compared to a small to mid-sized clan, but each and every member was strong enough to create a clan or guild of their own, so it wasn't really strange that the members were famous.

From the gossipers' point of view, I was sure that they preferred talking about our guild rather than talking about a large guild that was just an empty shell.

Therefore, everyone instantly recognized the Blue Guild's emblem. We had long gotten used to people staring at us, so we didn't really mind the attention.

Park Deok-Gu obediently raised our banner, but he looked like he was questioning if it was really okay for us to do this.

When the banner was raised, I led the horse toward Kim Hyun-Sung.

Jonobono[1], who wanted to tell the world about our nation's kindness, and Kim Hyun-Sung, who wasn't completely slow-witted, started forming a line.

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung, our handsome guild master, was at the front of the line.

As someone who had an important mission to promote my close relationship with our Hyun-Sung, I stood on his right while Jo Hye-Jin stood on his left.

Park Deok-Gu stood behind us while holding up the banner of the Blue Guild, and the guild members lined up behind us.

Kim Hyun-Sung's griffon started walking, and the people on the path moved aside.

'Nice… '

I felt a shiver down my spine as goosebumps broke out all over me.

The people started moving aside, and the others up ahead did the same. The people in front still had no idea what was going on, but they noticed that there was something strange, so they started looking around.

At first, the people only moved to follow the herd, but everyone eventually moved aside as if the Red Sea was being parted. They watched as the Blue Guild started walking in the middle of the Red Sea.

"The Blue…"

"Is that Kim Hyun-Sung?"

“The person riding the unicorn has to be Jo Hye-Jin…”

“That elf is… Elena. So the rumors about her joining the Blue Guild were true…”

“Look! It’s Sun Hee-Young!”

The people muttered among themselves.

‘I’m sure they’re curious since this is their first time seeing our faces in the flesh.’

“Lee Ki-Young!”

“The Alchemist of Light and the Hero of the continent!”

“The Blue Guild’s second-in-command. He actually doesn’t look like someone who would work for another person… Interesting.”

I wasn’t sure what part of it was interesting, but there were people who were playing the role of extras. There were cheesy lines, and I felt a sense of relief that I couldn’t quite describe. The best way to describe it would be that it felt like I was getting rewarded for all the hard work that I had been doing all this while.

A few of the party membersr[2] who liked the comments had to have thought that they had to look serious right now because they looked ahead with a thousand-yard stare. The ordinary guild members following the party members looked proud. It was kind of funny to see Park Deok-Gu looking all serious, but I knew my current expression didn’t fit me as well, so I wasn’t in any position to make fun of others.

‘It feels great to pretend like a big shot or someone amazing, but… ’

It was difficult…

It felt great to see the people moving aside as if they were the waters of the Red Sea and looking at us with various expressions. Some of them stared at us with respect, while some looked envious among many others.

“Kim Hyun-Sung… he’s a bigger monster than I thought…”

‘Oh, someone has a good eye for talent… ’

“He has become even stronger, right?”

“This is ridiculous. And he hasn’t been here for even five years?”

“The rumors and the magic holograms weren’t exaggerated. Shit…!”

I continued using Mind’s Eye because I had to figure out the strength of the foreign nations’ powerful figures.

‘They’re not that strong, but they’re not that weak either.’

If anything, they were average. They weren’t strong enough to be compared to the Eight Seats, but they were on Ahn Ki-Mo’s level, and they seemed to be playing an important role within their own clan or guild.

‘Maybe they’re a bit weaker than him… ’

The reason we recruited Ahn Ki-Mo was because of his prowess, combat sense, and the fact that he was a close-quarters combatant despite being a priest. We didn’t recruit him for his talent or stats.

All of a sudden, I heard someone talking.

“It’s nice to meet you, Guild Master of the Blue Guild.”

“…”

“I’m Kylie Yale, the Guild Master of the Manhattan Guild. It’s truly an honor to meet you,” she said.

“…”

‘She looks familiar.’

She was a tall woman. She was petite with blonde hair, blue eyes, and a face that could be considered beautiful. My overall impression of her was that she really knew how to dress herself up and that she was full of confidence. It became obvious why she was confident when I saw her overall status using Mind’s Eye.

She was strong enough to back her confidence up.

Kylie was a mage and was just as strong as the members of the Eight Seats. Her nature was Achiever Overflowing With Passion, and her attribute was useful as well. Overall, she had developed really well.

Based on just her stats, she was more useful than the Mist Summoner, but because of Cheon Kwan-Wi's special ability, she couldn't really be compared to him.

'Interesting. I feel like she had a huge role in her past life.'

I glanced at Kim Hyun-Sung, but he didn't take any special action. It was difficult to tell whether Kylie was an ally or an enemy, but he looked as if he had heard her name before.

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't show the same reaction as when he first met Jung Jin-Ho, so I assumed that she hadn't done something similar to the masked scum and his subordinates. The chances were low, but…

'He could be hiding his feelings… '

Our Hyun-Sung had grown quite a bit as well, but it honestly didn't matter which side she was on because it wasn't inevitable that an enemy of the past would become an enemy once again…

More importantly, we were currently trying to end the war completely on the continent, so even if Kylie was a villain in her past life, we couldn't treat her like one in this life. I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung understood that better than anyone.

Anyway, it was more important to know why this woman suddenly approached Kim Hyun-Sung and started acting friendly. I thought maybe I was overthinking it when all she did was greet him, but every action had a reason, and obviously, it bothered me that she approached him at a time like this.

I actually wanted to applaud her for her effort because suddenly talking to someone like that in the current situation had to have been difficult for her.

"So you're Kylie Yale," Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

"Have you heard of me?" she asked.

"I'm not that knowledgeable about the other nations, so I haven't heard much about

you, but I have heard that there's a famous mage in the West. I also heard that she was very famous on Earth," he replied.

"I didn't think you knew that much… It's an honor, Guild Master of Blue," she said.

"No, the honor is mine," he told her.

'Ah.'

No wonder she looked familiar.

'She's an actress.'

I didn't know her name, but I realized that I had to have seen her a few times in movies and dramas. It took me longer to realize it because I didn't have any interest in celebrities, but a few members of the guild looked surprised after seeing her.

There were celebrities in Lindel as well, but they didn't react the same way when they saw those celebrities.

Therefore, they had to have been surprised to see Kylie because she was a *real* celebrity.

"And… you must be Honorary Cardinal Lee Ki-Young. It's a real pleasure to meet you," Kylie greeted.

"Yes, nice to meet you as well. I've heard a lot about you. You look more beautiful in person," I complimented her.

"It's an honor, Father Lee Ki-Young."

When I indirectly expressed that I didn't want to talk to her right now, Kylie stepped back. She targeted Kim Hyun-Sung again because she discreetly stood next to him and started walking beside him.

I couldn't help but think that she was someone who knew how to think outside of the box.

'She's smart.'

Kylie was bold. She knew how to seize an opportunity and was decently greedy as well.

'Makes sense… That must have been how she managed to survive up until now.'

I couldn't generalize, but famous figures usually wouldn't have a good ending here, especially famous women. The majority would have had bad experiences in the tutorial dungeon, so I couldn't help but be surprised by Kylie's success.

Right now, she was probably using the same driving force that drove her to success in the tutorial dungeon. She used her fame appropriately, blended with the group, and she also knew how and when to gamble.

She was the type who would volunteer to do things whenever no one wanted to step up.

I focused on Kylie a bit. She seized the opportunity to get closer to Kim Hyun-Sung while talking to him, and even though it wasn't that big of a deal, the fact that she was exposing her relationship with him meant…

'She definitely has her own reason for doing this… '

I could already deduce what the other influential figures were thinking as they watched her walk with us.

'It's not like they're ballsy enough to greet and intercept us like what she had done… '

The famous actress herself definitely didn't expect that she would blend with us well because she started smiling brightly.

The ass in the lion's skin—those were the perfect words to describe her.

'How amusing… '

This place was fun because there were many different types of people here.

"O-Oppa. D-Do you know that woman?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

However, it wasn't fun to hear Jung Ha-Yan's voice behind me.

1. Bonobono + Jo Hye-Jin. It’s a joke from the Jo Hye-Jin Instruction Manual Chapters xD ☜

2. Party members here means the member of Blue Guild’s First Party consisting ☜

CHAPTER 468
CONTINENTAL JOINT TRAINING (3)

'Is she having another mental breakdown?'

I got scared for a moment, but thankfully, it seemed that I didn't have to worry about it. I was relieved because it turned out that Jung Ha-Yan was just feeling a bit annoyed. If I had to describe it, she was just temporarily annoyed, so it wasn't a big deal.

Yes, she was pouting with a pale face, and she stuttered at least four times throughout her sentence. However, this was nothing compared to whenever she started talking to herself.

Jung Ha-Yan had to have thought that Kylie was a charming woman because she was annoyed by Kylie's friendliness. Jung Ha-Yan was usually wary of other women, but she was stricter toward beautiful women. If Kylie Yale had approached me instead of Kim Hyun-Sung, then Jung Ha-Yan would have definitely blown up.

Fortunately, Kylie Yale wasn't interested in me.

We both nodded in relief.

'She became an ascetic.'

After carrying around the lump named Jung Ha-Yan for years, I wanted to applaud myself for helping her to be more aware of herself. I was proud that I knew her enough to write a book called Jung Ha-Yan Instruction Manual.

Naturally, I spoke as if I wasn't interested in her.

"I think she was a famous actress on Earth, but… I don't really know her name. I'm not really interested in celebrities."

"*Ah*… I see. I've seen her before, but I don't… r-really remember her well… I don't really watch movies…" Jung Ha-Yan said.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yes. B-By the way, oppa… when you were on Earth, was there a celebrity… y-you liked?” she asked.

It was a random question, but I knew better than anyone that this was part of Jung Ha-Yan’s trap. If I nodded like an idiot, not only would that actress disappear without a sound, but every woman out there who looked similar to her would disappear as well.

“No. I was too busy, so I didn’t know any celebrities,” I replied.

“*Ahh*… I-I see,” she commented.

“What about you, Ha-Yan?” I asked.

“I-It was the same for me. My house… had no television and… I also had no one to go and watch movies with…” she answered.

‘How sad.’

“Really?” I asked.

“Yes…”

I started feeling sad. I knew that she had been abandoned by her parents and her two sisters, but looking at Jung Ha-Yan’s face made me sad when I recalled that.

She revealed the sad truth like it was nothing, and even though she spoke as if she didn’t care anymore, I got affected by her words

‘I think Jung Ha-Yeon was the oldest, and Jung Ha-Eun was the middle child.’

It was a bit vague when Jung Ha-Yan lost contact with them, so I searched to see if they got summoned here as well, but I was unsuccessful.

Jung Ha-Yan also didn’t really like mentioning her sisters and mother. I had never really seen their names, even in the summoner’s archives, so they had to have really abandoned Jung Ha-Yan.

My heart broke even more when I recalled that the hapless mage was trying her best to stick close to me because she was afraid of being abandoned.

'Even Azmodan[1] *will applaud them… If I ever meet them, I'm going to backstab them so hard.'*

I patted Jung Ha-Yan's head out of sadness, and she smiled as if she felt better, but I quickly removed my hand because I had a feeling that something strange was going to happen if I continued patting her.

Meanwhile, the soldiers of the Sacred Democratic Country who came with the ordinary guild members of the Blue Guild entered the large building, and people also started moving according to Jo Hye-Jin's instructions.

Of course, the executives heading to the resting place weren't moving with them.

Light Ki-Young and Kim Hyun-Sung, the important figures of the Sacred Democratic Country, had a meeting to attend soon.

Jo Hye-Jin would take care of another business, so Sun Hee-Young was given the task of taking care of the guild members.

I had to leave, so I started talking to her, "Miss Hee-Young, please take the guild members and stand by at the assigned location."

"Okay."

"They can train or take a look around, but please tell them to refrain from talking to the soldiers from other nations. It honestly doesn't matter, but there's no need to create unnecessary conflict. There are some politically sensitive nations as well… You can eat separately if you want, but I recommend eating with the common soldiers," I continued.

"All right, Mr. Ki-Young," Sun Hee-Young replied.

"Thank you," I said.

"It's fine. You don't have to thank me for it. It's part of my job. I hope you have a good meeting," she said.

Sun Hee-Young's mind was a bit unstable as well, but I felt relieved to see her smile.

Sun Hee-Young looked like a normal person right now, but it was probably because I had crazier women around me.

"Ha-Yan as well…" I said.

"W-Where are you going?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"A meeting. I'm going with Mr. Hyun-Sung and Miss Elena. I think it's going to take some time…" I replied.

"W-Why is the elf going?" she asked.

"She's an executive of the Kingdom of Others," I answered.

"*Ahh*… I… see. Is C-Cha Hee-Ra going as well?" she asked.

"Probably…"

'She's moderately furious now… '

Jung Ha-Yan started pouting, and her face turned pale as well.

'She's on the verge of becoming really angry now.'

If I left her like this without doing anything to assuage her anger, then she would naturally become *really* angry. The moment that happened, it would only be a matter of time until she became *extremely* angry.

I thought she had matured during the time we spent apart, but her mood had to have soured when she heard that I was going to be with Elena and Cha Hee-Ra.

In addition, I was sure that she wasn't happy about the idea that I would be in the same room as Cha Hee-Ra.

"I won't come back too late," I told her.

"Okay…"

She still looked kind of sad, and I would've taken Jung Ha-Yan with me if I could, but the problem was that I couldn't do that. If all the executive figures in the meeting room brought their adjutant, then the meeting room would become really crowded.

She had to have understood that I had no choice because she nodded while pouting.

When I started patting her head, she was no longer pouting.

During all this, the elf stood next to me as if she was happy. Jung Ha-Yan didn't really stop Elena because she thought that Elena still had to treat me, but she wasn't exactly happy about it. It would have been a bit better if Kim Hyun-Sung was between them, but he had already gone over to the meeting room with that woman.

For some reason, I kept on feeling as if someone was staring at me from behind.

'I'm sure it's nothing.'

I headed toward the meeting room while suppressing my anxiety. To be honest, it was too small to be called a meeting room, but they had to have booked this room in advance because there were many people in the room. The authoritative figures of the entire continent and the masters of powerful guilds had gathered here.

It was like a National Assembly.

There was a large magic hologram in the middle of the room and a podium where the moderator would supervise the meeting. There was also a large, round table with luxurious chairs. The Sacred Democratic Country was assigned to the uppermost seats of the center, and as I walked down to my seat, I started seeing familiar faces.

I greeted Cheon Kwan-Wi and Yu Ran of the Eight Seats briefly. Kasugano Yuno and I greeted each other with our eyes. Cha Hee-Ra wasn't here yet.

What caught my attention was the grim look on the faces of the masters of the mid-sized guilds, but I understood why they were nervous. It was all because it was their first time attending an event like this.

In addition, this meeting was the first step that would decide the fate of the continent.

Time went on, and people started talking among themselves. The meeting hadn't

even started, but the majority of the people in the room were already sharing information with each other.

Some were walking around the room to make connections, while others exchanged secrets as if they already knew most of the people here. I was honestly doing the same as them. I spent time talking to the people from Laios, the Republic, and the Kingdom of Others.

Of course, I also greeted the people whom I thought were useful. Naturally, I smiled at the people who had decided to approach me first.

The people from the mid-sized guilds and clans were walking around the room to see if they could get any benefits from the more powerful figures. Kim Hyun-Sung was also busy greeting other people.

He would shake the hands of those who approached him, but I could see that he was nervous as well.

'Seriously… '

This meeting was for the sake of uniting to stop the upcoming threat to the continent, but the majority of the people here seemed like they were only here for their own interests.

It became obvious that most of them didn't take the threat seriously.

The people from the Republic, Laios, the Kingdom of Others, and even the people from the Sacred Democratic Country seemed like they were thinking that the threat was still in the distant future.

If even the neighboring nations were thinking that way, it would be easy to deduce what the foreign nations were thinking as well.

'A meteor is apparently going to fall on the continent someday!'

If their doubt was caused by how they simply couldn't believe that Benigoa descended upon the continent by borrowing Light Ki-Young's body during the war, then it would be an issue. After all, I only said that the threat existed.

Still, even if I told them the details about the threat, I was sure that it wouldn't have

made much of a difference because humans were slackers who would only start planning on how to tackle a problem when the problem was already in front of them.

'They'll find it hard to take things seriously… '

If they got dragged into that train of thought, then it would be hard for them to take things seriously.

Kim Hyun-Sung had to have reached the same conclusion as me because his expression turned ugly.

'He finally realized… '

I thought it was going to get worse once we started the joint training. Now that he had stopped all the events that had happened in his past life from exacerbating, he probably thought that all he had to do now was gather forces, but…

'This is a mess… '

I didn't have to use Mind's Eye to see that this meeting was a mess.

There was a meeting participant that looked like a bloated pig. There was no way I would believe that he was a warrior. Even worse, he wasn't giving off the same vibe as Park Deok-Gu.

Unlike Park Deok-Gu, who looked like a huge lump of muscle, the bloated pig looked like a huge lump of fat. Honestly, he actually looked like he was struggling to breathe even though he wasn't doing anything other than sitting in his chair.

However, he wasn't the only problem.

There was also a guy covered in luxurious items from head to toe, and there were people who looked like they couldn't fight at all.

In addition, there were even people whom I wasn't actually sure if they were leaders capable enough of deciding the fate of the continent.

I already knew what Kim Hyun-Sung was thinking while watching this sight. He had been stuck in Lindel for most of his life, so I was sure that it was his first time seeing all this.

'In our current situation, it's impossible for us to face the upcoming threat.'

It was nothing more than my imagination, but I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung was thinking that way. I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung looked extremely hopeful before he walked into this room, but now, he was obviously in despair.

The first meeting eventually started. The topic was serious and grim, but the meeting ended in just two hours. Afterward, the leaders of the continent seemed like they wanted to promote *friendship* with each other, so they decided to go out on an extravagant dinner that lasted for over four hours using the denizens' tax money.

'It's a mess. A mess!'

It felt like I was reading the abridged version of a certain country.

---

1. the Lord of Sin in Diablo ☜

CHAPTER 469
CONTINENTAL JOINT TRAINING (4)

I honestly couldn't even remember what the meeting was all about. All I could remember was people thanking the leaders for coming together, the objective of the joint training, and how the mock battles would come first before the joint training.

The training schedule was also explained, and there were many different useless topics.

However, the lavish dinner that happened afterward was what stupefied me.

'It was fun.'

It felt like the stress I had accumulated over the past few days had completely disappeared.

'South Americans sure know how to have fun.'

They were intense, and they were skilled at playing on our level and the women—Anyway, they apparently got summoned to a place where the locals praised the god of drinking, singing, and dancing.

I felt kind of bad for the common soldiers who had to survive on rations, but there was obviously corruption here. The rotten figures among us didn't seem to care about that. Otherwise, they wouldn't have decided to go out and drink.

Of course, the meeting was beneficial for those rotten figures, and I was sure that they thought that last night was worth it.

As for me, I focused on looking satisfied on the outside, and the guys who wanted to be my brother or friend were probably busy screaming in joy in a corner of their room.

Those who had no idea how beneficial it was to bootlick me and establish a relationship with the figure who was basically the leader of the continent's potion-

making industry weren't here.

Those brainless people had gotten a taste of authority elsewhere, which made them even more corrupted. Actually, some of them were the absolute worst type of people.

The majority of them only managed to climb up to their current positions by destroying the smaller guilds, and it was funny because I didn't find that strange at all. It would actually be ridiculous if the guilds and clans here were impeccably clean.

On Earth, large companies were constantly involved in various issues, so the groups here would obviously not be squeaky clean.

When I recalled how the Black Swan Guild and the Blue Guild often walked down the gray area between legal and illegal actions, I couldn't really criticize these guilds for what they had done to achieve their current status.

'They're a bit too much, though… At least, we're conscious of our own actions. The Blue Guild is better.'

Of course, ordinary guilds and clans existed as well. There were guilds like the Red Mercenary Guild, which provided a sense of belonging to the people and represented the entire city where its headquarters was located.

The guild masters of those guilds were different. Unlike the guild masters of the corrupt guilds, the guild masters of guilds like the Red Mercenary Guild were busy training and were proud of their own process.

Unfortunately, many of them were too weak to be considered in the big picture.

I could remember laughing at the guild members of the Friendship Clan. I honestly couldn't remember their names anymore, but a strong guild from a foreign city where the overall standards for a strong guild were low would still be a bit stronger than the Friendship Clan.

Those guilds only had a few talented members, and only around twenty of them could compare to the Eight Seats.

To be honest, the fact that they had around twenty people on that level was a miracle, but if I had to average out the overall level, the highest rank would be C.

It would be nice if the average were S, but the average rankings of the members had to be at least A for them to fight the upcoming threat.

I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung was agonizing over this more than me.

Kim Hyun-Sung already knew the importance of resting, so the fact that he didn't drink even a sip of alcohol during the previous dinner made it clear that he was *really* anxious.

It was also possible that aside from thinking about how something had to have gone wrong, I was sure that he was also thinking about what went wrong and where things went wrong.

It was clear that he was nervously reviewing the result that he had obtained after working hard in his current life. If the result were a bag of chips, then he had to have realized upon opening it that ninety percent of the bag of chips was air.

The result had to have shocked Kim Hyun-Sung so much that he felt like going insane.

'I'm sure he's thinking about where he should start fixing things… '

It was something I was thinking about as well, but I couldn't find the answer to it.

I looked up and saw soldiers collecting their breath on one side of the room.

A mock battle had just ended.

"*Hahaha.* Looks like the power of the Iron Blood Knights wasn't just a rumor. It was just a mock battle, but I didn't think that they would break through us so easily."

"If this were an actual war, we wouldn't have been able to attack like that. The Kingdom didn't even use half of its mana in the mock battle just now… and the formation was a problem as well. It's embarrassing that we lost this many soldiers. If you were able to use your magic properly, we would have lost this battle. As expected from the mage soldiers led by Gellahan of Hellfire."

"Looks like the skills of the Men of Iron Blood weren't exaggerated."

'…'

“We’re not as strong as you, Sir Gellahan. *Hahaha*.”

‘They’re so full of themselves. Seriously… ’

It was ridiculous to see the leaders of the two groups complimenting each other, and it was also ridiculous, but Kim Hyun-Sung was staring at them with a frown.

‘Yeah, I understand how you’re feeling… ’

Even I thought that their behavior was ridiculous because they didn’t really have to pamper each other after the mock battle. I wonder what Kim Hyun-Sung was thinking as he watched the two pamper each other.

I got so curious that I really wanted to read his mind.

Meanwhile, the two leaders approached me.

“What did you think, Father Lee Ki-Young?”

“It was amazing. I was especially impressed by the mage soldiers led by Sir Gellahan of Hellfire,” I replied.

Gellahan of Hellfire, my ass!

Compared to Jung Ha-Yan, he was nothing more than a campfire.

“It is my honor. I could have never imagined that you’d give us such an amazing evaluation, even though we lost the mock battle.”

“It’s because the formation itself didn’t match the theme of the mock battle, which is castle siege. The formation puts the soldiers at a disadvantage in the first place. I know better than anyone just how difficult it is to stop the enemy vanguard when your own vanguard is weaker than the enemy vanguard,” I commented.

‘To be honest, I just wanted to see how a group of mage soldiers with a weak vanguard will deal with their opponent.’

Unfortunately, I didn’t learn that much from them.

“The Iron Blood Knights’ ability to break through obstacles was simply too strong, so

there wasn't much that you could have done… It was a chaotic battle, but I can see how you've developed your soldiers from scratch," I added.

"*Haha*. You're embarrassing us. You're spoiling me too much, Father Lee Ki-Young."

"I'm just expressing how I felt, Sir Gellahan," I said.

"Thank you. *Ah*… by the way, the next mock battle is a battle between the North and the West. The adventurers of the north are famous for their pride, and I can't help but think that the battle might become a bit rough. Hopefully, no major accident will happen."

The North was a prideful bunch, but they didn't seem to be that skillful. The excited northern adventurers walked into a trap, basically committing suicide, which ended the battle.

The northern adventurers were frustrated, and I thought those emotions would actually help them because it would motivate them to work even harder so that they would eventually defeat the adversaries who previously defeated them.

The Men of Iron Blood and Gellahan's childish trick were really pathetic in my eyes.

'They're going to make a mess. Shit.'

Their skills were limited, but that wasn't related to how much mess they could create.

They were worried about their soldiers' condition, so they obviously wouldn't train them too hard. A few soldiers had administrative work to do after training, so I was sure that the leaders were worried that the training method was a bit too harsh.

It wasn't that I couldn't understand the leaders' concerns. On this continent, people were assets. There were potions and holy magic to assuage fatigue, but the soldiers would eventually get burnout, which would affect their training.

If I were a manager of an athlete team, then I wouldn't want to exhaust my athletes as well because they were related to how much money I could potentially make. Of course, it wasn't the only reason why I thought that these leaders were trolling.

'Why are they hiding their forces? Those guys… Those who have nothing to show are

the worst.'

There were some leaders who decided to hide their forces and conceal their true abilities during the mock battle. Unfortunately, I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung still wouldn't be satisfied with them, even if they revealed all they had.

Of course, it would have undeniably become a great battle if they had gone all out.

They were low-ranking adventurers, yes, but they had plenty of experience. In addition, their livelihood was to fight, so I was sure that they had something up their sleeves. I actually saw a few things through Mind's Eye.

However, it was obvious why they didn't want to go all out.

They simply didn't want to show everyone their true powers.

'What, do you really think that they're the main character of a story? Why are they hiding their powers as if they were the main character?'

It was already difficult to enjoy a mock battle, and these people were making it even harder to watch. It was exhausting just to match their mood. To be honest, I wanted to wear a mask and ruin this joint training, and even if I couldn't do that punch, I would still do my best just to punch those bastards who weren't taking all this seriously.

'Be patient. I just have to be patient.'

If I had other ideas, then I would have made a move by now. However, the main reason I decided to let things run their course was that I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung would eventually address the situation.

Of course, it wasn't my original plan, but it wasn't a bad idea.

I was Light Ki-Young, Benigoa's proxy, but it would be ridiculous for me to stand up and start yelling at them to prepare for the upcoming threat. I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung wanted me to create a beautiful scene, which involved me working hard with everyone else, but I thought that showing my usual self was more effective than that.

The usual Lee Ki-Young took a lot of care of his connections, and he knew how to

take advantage of the situation as well. In addition, he also knew how to play along with other people while smiling.

I wasn't sure if this was actually going to work, but it *could* work.

In a few days, I was expecting Kim Hyun-Sung to have this kind of thought…

'Mr. Ki-Young is aware of the approaching threat, but he has no idea how serious the threat is… '

Making him think that way was my final goal because I wanted Kim Hyun-Sung to start talking to me. I wanted to hear just what exactly was the threats, how dangerous it was, and I also wanted him to confess to me that he was a regressor.

'I need to know just what exactly the threat is so that I can prepare for it, Hyun-Sung.'

Like everyone else, I was also in the dark, but I had to remain quiet.

'I'm sure he'll come to find me if things don't work out… '

After all, the Kim Hyun-Sung that I knew had never been a patient person.

CHAPTER 470
DRIVING A WEDGE (1)

"Cheers!"

"Cheers!"

'They're crazy. Crazy!'

This was already the fifth gathering. It had already been five days since they had arrived here, so I couldn't help but feel shocked at the fact that it was already the fifth gathering.

'They're amazing. Simply amazing.'

They were playing, eating, and enjoying themselves, but playing this much would usually make people get tired of it. I had also gotten tired of it to the point that I was thinking that it was about time for Kim Hyun-Sung to say something to them.

Most of the continent's forces had gathered here, and it had already been five days since the *training* started.

I had my own worries, but seeing that Kim Hyun-Sung still hadn't intervened made me realize that we still had time. I thought he was going to run over here and intervene just like Jingoo, who had been looking for Doraemon.

However, he probably thought that dealing with a sensitive topic on his own rather than talking about it with others was better.

'Try all you want. It probably won't work.'

I could have heard information about the approaching threat while discreetly mentioning Benigoa, but I didn't want to bring up the topic first because I thought that it would be more natural if Kim Hyun-Sung were to approach me first. It was also advantageous in many ways, so I didn't want to give up the benefit of asking the question first.

While I was having other thoughts, I started hearing loud noises around me.

“Beer really becomes tastier the more sweat you shed. Don’t you agree, Father Lee Ki-Young?”

“I agree. *Haha*. I think the atmosphere is even better because I’m drinking with great people. *Geez…* I didn’t think that a day like this would come. Who could have known that the entire continent had such great chemistry?” I commented.

“You’re right. I want to thank everyone who helped the continent become one.”

‘Bullshit.’

“Your glass is empty. Let me fill it up for you, Father Lee Ki-Young.”

“Thank you, Jamila.”

“I’ve only heard about you through rumors… I really wanted to meet you. It was hard to meet you because I live so far away, and the diplomatic relations between the Sacred Democratic Country and our kingdom had been severed. It’s truly an honor to meet you like this,” she explained.

“It’s an honor for me as well. If I knew a beautiful woman like yourself lived there, I would have long visited that place,” I told her.

“I appreciate the compliment, *hehe*,” she giggled.

“I’m being honest. I’m just telling you how I felt,” I said.

“There’s a strange atmosphere between you two. If this continues, you two might disappear somewhere,” Gellahan chimed in.

“Sir Gellahan… you and your naughty jokes,” Jamila said shyly.

I looked around while everyone was having a great time and saw the scums wasting their time today as well.

‘Kim Hyun-Sung should be here to see this… ’

The majority of them were in charge of powerful guilds within their own nations and

kingdoms, but none of them were normal. The people with the hellfire-whatever and the Iron Blood-whatever had grand nicknames and job names, but only a few of them lived up to their names. In other words, the majority of them were trash.

The behavior of the woman named Jamila next to me was also a sight to see.

She criticized Gellahan for his naughty jokes, but her body language was betraying her because she looked ready for *it* anytime.

It honestly made me feel kind of uneasy. I heard that she was part of a powerful clan that barely made the cut, but she seemed more interested in other things rather than in the training. I obviously wasn't happy that she approached me. I got even more uneasy when I thought about Jung Ha-Yan's recent anger level.

Actually, more than anything else…

'It's difficult to act like a scum right now.'

I was a citizen of a righteous nation, which had been advocating for justice and kindness, so it was difficult for me to act like a cancerous figure in society and play along with them.

Therefore, it wasn't really strange that I felt uneasy in this kind of setting.

I felt like I was wearing clothes that didn't really fit me.

Of course, I enjoyed acting like scum once in a while, but no matter how hard I thought about it, being part of this scummy festival didn't fit Lee Ki-Young at all. We were basically like magnets pushing each other away or a divorced couple.

'Acting is really hard.'

"Let me pour you a drink, Sir Gellahan," I offered.

"This is an honor, Father Lee Ki-Young," he said.

"You feel honored about many things. No need to be so polite. You're not training right now, and we've gathered to promote friendship between us. Since you trained hard, you must do your best in this gathering as well," I told him.

“Yes…” he said.

“Please have another drink, Miss Jamila,” I offered.

“Sure.”

“Miss Jamila looks so drunk that I want to lend her my shoulder,” Gellahan said.

“I like Father Lee Ki-Young’s shoulder more than yours,” she commented.

“*Hahaha*. I have a feeling that something is going to happen between you two tonight,” he laughed.

“Please don’t say that Sir Gellahan,” Jamila said.

“I-I’m ashamed…” I muttered.

“How could I not make that comment? You two became close so naturally…” he pointed out.

‘Shit, acting is hard… ’

“You seem like you’re in a good mood as well, Father Lee Ki-Young. This is the happiest I’ve seen you so far,” Gellahan commented.

“I’m spending time with great people, so I’m naturally happy,” I told him.

“Please eat this, Father Lee Ki-Young. Or can I feed you? Say *ah*…” Jamila offered.

“Miss Jamila…” I said.

“Please accept it. *Ah*…” she repeated.

I had no other choice but to do it. Unfortunately, this kind of role didn’t really fit me.

“By the way, Father Lee Ki-Young,” Gellahan started.

“Yes?”

“I apologize for suddenly bringing this up, but regarding the recent mock battle…”

“Which mock battle are you referring to?” I asked.

“The Great City Lindel Alliance and the Southern Kingdom Alliance…” he replied.

“*Ah*, yes, I remember. There was a mock battle,” I said.

“*Ahem*. Many people have expressed their concerns…” he trailed off.

“What? What are they concerned about?” I asked.

“The public believes that the Great City Lindel Alliance is going a bit too far in the mock battles. Of course, I understand the masters’ desire to be passionate about the training, but I feel like they’ve been handling it too seriously. Some of the adventurers of the Southern Kingdom Alliance were actually injured,” he answered.

“I think I understand what you mean,” I commented.

“O-Of course I’m not trying to criticize the Great City Lindel Alliance, and I’m being objective here. I’m telling you this because I’m sincerely worried that bad rumors might spread about the Great City Lindel Alliance since you’re from Lindel,” he continued.

“*Ah*… I completely understand what you’re saying, Sir Gellahan. There were definitely a lot of wounded adventurers. They can be treated with potions, but the accumulated exhaustion can’t be treated with mere potions… Even I thought that they were taking it a bit too far earlier. It’s great that they’re doing their best, but I think they took it too far,” I explained.

Many people got wounded, but the number of wounded participants was within the acceptable range. There weren’t any casualties, and it was the kind of mock battle that Kim Hyun-Sung wanted. However, the rotten people who were part of the scummy group had to have felt kind of burdened by the Great City Lindel Alliance’s ferocity.

I kind of understood how they felt. One side wanted to train in moderation, while the other side was training as if their life was on the line. There was a massive difference between the two groups when it came to the idea of training. I could sense Kim Hyun-Sung’s urgency in the mock battle, but unfortunately, these scummy bastards didn’t really like Kim Hyun-Sung’s training ferocity.

'I think he's expecting something unrealistic to happen here… '

I couldn't help but think that Kim Hyun-Sung was close-minded. He made a mistake by thinking that if our side trained passionately, the other side would follow us as well.

Kim Hyun-Sung's trump card, which he hoped would change the mind of the continental alliance members, wasn't being used properly at all.

Of course, the situation wasn't that bad for me because if Kim Hyun-Sung's plan were to fail, then it meant that I would be one step closer to my plan.

I was hoping that Kim Hyun-Sung would come to find Ki-Youngaemon[1] as soon as possible.

"So you've been thinking the same thing, Father Lee Ki-Young," Gellahan said.

"Our guild master has always been a bit passionate about training… I'll make sure to talk to him about it. I'm not sure if it will be helpful, but I'll do my best to make sure that the mage soldiers under you won't suffer unnecessary injuries," I told him.

"Thank you for your consideration," he said.

"I hope you don't have high expectations, though. All I'll be doing is talking to the guild master… It'd be nice if it's going to be helpful, but I don't have that kind of power," I added.

"*Ah*…"

"And I also agreed with the guild master's request of not participating in this training, so my words don't really have that much weight when it comes to the training," I continued.

"That's…"

"You can just think that I have a different task to do. As you know, there are tasks that are just as important as training. The authority to manage our troops belongs to the guild masters, and since the three guilds of Lindel are working together, it's difficult for me to offer much help in this," I explained.

"*Ah*… I see," Gellahan commented.

"Yes…"

"B-But you're still Father Lee Ki-Young. You're the first person in the Sacred Democratic Country to receive a position in the Vatican, and the leader of the Sacred Democratic Country trusts you a lot as well. I'm not in any place to say this since I'm just an outsider, but personally…" Gellahan trailed off.

"Yes?"

"I feel like the Guild Master of the B-Blue Guild is wary of you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young," he continued.

'What is this bastard talking about?'

"*Haha.* It's nothing like that. I think there's been a misunderstanding…" I commented.

"*Ahem*… The Guild Master of the Blue Guild wasn't the only one who contributed to the growth of the guild. If it hadn't been for you, I'm sure the guild would have ended up being a third-class guild at most. Despite that, you were completely excluded from the training…" he continued.

'What do you mean excluded? I told him that I didn't want to participate… '

"Burning the bridge after crossing it—there's a similar saying in our country. It will be nice if I'm just worried for nothing, but…" Gellahan trailed off.

'Yeah, you're worried for nothing… '

"I'm worried that the Guild Master of the Blue Guild may have other plans," he continued.

'He sure knows how to speak bullshit.'

Unless someone were an idiot, they would understand what was going on right now.

Gellahan had been calm until now, but he suddenly changed.

The way he dropped a bomb on me also made me feel uncomfortable.

I wasn't really sure of his goals, but I knew what he was aiming for, at the very least.

'Driving a wedge… He wants to drive a wedge between us.'

I started feeling bad for Kim Hyun-Sung, and it was all because he had to work with these scums for the sake of results.

'Talk all you want, you bastard. Hyun-Sung and I will never split up.'

---

1. Lee Ki-Young + Doraemon ☜

CHAPTER 471
DRIVING A WEDGE (2)

Situations like this were always exhausting to handle, and it was similar to a scam that one would pull on a pushover. I wasn't sure whether he told me that because he was genuinely worried about me or if he had an ulterior motive, but the latter was most likely.

Everyone had gathered here to prepare for the upcoming threat, but they were still outsiders despite *uniting* as one here. We were getting along right now, but there was no guarantee that today's friends wouldn't become enemies in the future.

It was even more obvious if one thought about how there were many groups here that were secretly wary of each other.

For example, the Blue Guild. The guild was worthy of the *best* title, it had many businesses from many different industries, and it had a huge influence as well, which wasn't just limited to Lindel. The guild could influence the entire continent, so it was natural that there were many guilds that wanted to reduce the guild's influence.

On the outside, they acted as if they were ready to lay down their lives, but behind our backs, it was natural for them to have other thoughts.

I was sure that some of them were people who had started their own potion-making businesses but failed, while others were definitely forced to close their illegal businesses after being kicked out of the market by the Blue Guild.

'It's the same for this bastard and that one as well.'

I was expecting a few of them to be wary of me, but the same people were trying to extract some profits from me. I was sure that they had long come to an agreement before the joint training was announced. They had to have investigated the Blue Guild, and they definitely came up with many ideas to compete against the Blue Guild.

They probably thought that ruining the relationship between Kim Hyun-Sung and

me would be really effective. It wasn't a bad plan as well because many people thought of the Blue Guild as a righteous guild.

'It's not a bad idea.'

I would have come up with a similar plan.

To the public, the Blue Guild's power structure was really strange because Kim Hyun-Sung had granted me—the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild—an unimaginable amount of power, and I used that power to influence my surroundings.

Of course, no outsider really knew who had the rights to parties, and my honorary cardinal status was higher than Kim Hyun-Sung's status as the Guild Master of the Blue Guild.

There was a saying that there couldn't be two suns in the sky or two emperors on Earth, but for the Blue Guild, there were two suns, so the outsiders were probably thinking that we were internally unstable.

If the news about Kim Hyun-Sung and I splitting spread all over the continent, I was sure that there would be a truck full of authoritative figures that would celebrate that event.

'For the past five days… '

I was falling for their plan.

I leaned back and swept my gaze at the people looking at me.

At the sight, I couldn't help but feel sad.

'I thought we were friends… Jerks.'

I felt the same for Jamila, who had been holding onto me tightly like Jung Ha-Yan.

'I loved you, you bitch.'

Of course, it was too early to be suspicious because the people of this scummy party and I had spent a decent amount of time together.

It was fun to trust people, and it was also possible that I was just overthinking it, like what Kim Hyun-Sung had been doing before I intervened as Bitch Ki-Yeon.

'Yeah, I shouldn't doubt people so easily.'

I wanted to sound them out. To do that, I had to pretend that I was falling for their plan.

When I spoke, the people around me started talking as if they had been waiting for it.

"*Hahaha*… That's not true. Our guild master isn't that kind of person. If he were planning on kicking me out, he would have done it already," I said.

"*Ahem*…"

"Father Lee Ki-Young… I'm sorry to tell you this, but… people are bound to change. The Blue Guild isn't the same Blue Guild in the past. Just like everyone else, there was a time when the guild worked as passionately as the people here, but that's not the case anymore. Your every movement is under the scrutiny of the entire continent, so I also know that there's a chance that you're thinking about working with him until the end, but he probably doesn't like the idea of you gaining too much power," Gellahan explained.

'Our Hyun-Sung isn't that type of person, you bastards…!'

"Sir Gellahan is right, Father Lee Ki-Young. We're not saying that the Guild Master of the Blue Guild is that type of person, but to prepare for an unexpected situation," another chimed in.

"*Ugh*…"

'They're really coming at me.'

"It doesn't hurt to be careful. *Haha*… Think of it as getting insurance. We're not telling you to do anything but to simply prepare yourself because preparation will help you a lot. I'm telling you this because this happens often in our kingdom," he continued.

"Indeed. I'm sure there are many people on the continent who have been in the same situation as you. No guild master of a group will just sit by and watch another

member gain a lot of power. He's smiling on the outside, but I'm sure he's wary of you," said someone else.

"You were also chosen by the Goddess of Benigoa… you possess the power to use the power of light freely, and within Lindel and the Sacred Democratic Country, people know you more than the Guild Master of the Blue Guild," he commented.

"The entire continent is aware of how close you two are, but—"

"…"

"…"

"What are you all doing? You guys are making Father Lee Ki-Young feel uncomfortable… Do we really have to talk about this here?" Jamila criticized.

It was amusing how Jamila glared at them while pretending to be the mediator. If I didn't have Mind's Eye, then I wouldn't have noticed them exchanging eye contact while they were talking to me.

'I'm sure she told them not to go overboard.'

They had to be careful about going too far because that would make their behavior look strange.

I swept my gaze at the people who became silent and sighed.

'They're all in on this. These jerks… '

Even I couldn't help but think that they got a bit too desperate to build things up. It became obvious that they weren't that experienced when it came to something like this, especially when I saw how they teamed up just now.

Of course, one could also say that we had just gotten close to each other, but if I were in their shoes, I would have been more cautious.

I would have done preliminary work for a month rather than five days, and after sprinkling some bad rumors, I would have created a similar situation to what they had created for me today.

Of course, I was sure that they thought of that as well, but they had to have found it hard to hold it in upon seeing the delicious bait.

When I thought about the flow of the conversation earlier, I understood why they charged at me so quickly.

'Wow, I can't trust anyone here aside from Hyun-Sung… '

Their betrayal had completely destroyed the relationship we had built over the past five days, and I realized just then that I shouldn't give these greedy bastards even a tinge of my trust.

'What do you need badly? Do you want to join the potion-making industry? Are you guys worried about Lindel growing too big? Is it because we opened a weapon business? Maybe the free trade agreement was a bit unfair?'

I felt bothered about many things.

"I think Sir Gellahan is drunk. Anyway, let's forget about the ridiculous conversation and have another round of drinks. I'm sure they didn't mean any harm, Father Lee Ki-Young. Everyone only said what they said because they're worried about you, so don't worry about it," Jamila said.

"I'm… very sorry about this, Father Lee Ki-Young. I'm sorry for the nonsense…" Gellahan said.

"I apologize as well. We shouldn't be talking about this here…" someone else said.

"Relax, Father Lee Ki-Young. For me, please?" Jamila requested.

"*Ahem*, it's not because of you guys. I was just thinking about something else…" I said.

"I'm glad. I apologize again if it made you uncomfortable, Father Lee Ki-Young," Gellahan apologized.

"*Hahaha*, it's fine. You all said it because you were worried about someone like me. I should actually be thanking you. I never thought about what you said before… It's a bit too early to think seriously about this, but I don't think it'll hurt to think about it once in a while," I told them.

“We’re glad you think that way.”

“If you need someone to talk about it with, I’ll be happy to give you advice anytime, Father Lee Ki-Young,” Jamila offered.

“I’ll be sure to let you know at that point,” I told her.

“Shall we toast?” she suggested.

‘The way they’re going back and forth is amazing. Bastards.’

If Gellahan and the others were attackers, then Jamila was the one controlling the pace of the battle. I wasn’t sure if they had known each other for a long time or if they recently agreed to execute their grand plan, but I wanted to applaud them for their teamwork.

If my relationship with Jamila had gotten a bit deeper, then it would have been easier for them to ruin my relationship with Kim Hyun-Sung because there weren’t many methods as effective as a bedside lecture.[1]

‘I’m done with you, you bitch.’

I wasn’t planning on staying with her anymore, but I nodded harder than usual.

The situation itself was actually fun because no one was ballsy enough to do something like this in the Sacred Democratic Country.

Of course, it was only natural considering my status there.

In the Sacred Democratic Country, people would automatically bow toward me before I could even say anything.

Therefore, I was having fun dealing with these guys, and their refreshing reactions were even more amusing to behold, especially whenever I respond positively to their words.

‘Did I look like a pushover to them?’

They had to have thought that I was a pushover because they lacked information about me. In addition, the public viewed me as a holy saint who had sacrificed

himself to the brink of death for the sake of the continent.

Aside from the journalists affiliated with the Blue Guild, the denizens of the Sacred Democratic Country, and a very small number of people, not many people had actually seen me in the flesh outside the Sacred Democratic Country.

“Actually…” I started.

“Yes?”

“No, it’s nothing,” I said.

When I spoke as if I was going to tell them something, the scummy bastards got excited. They looked like they really wanted to hear what I was about to say.

“Is there something bothering you?” Gellahan asked.

“I wouldn’t say that it has been bothering me, but… I recently felt like there’s some distance between the guild master and me…” I replied.

I wonder how many people would get involved…

“I’m sure it’s difficult, but please talk comfortably. This conversation is just between us,” he requested.

I was sure that they weren’t doing this just to me, so I couldn’t help but be curious about who was with Kim Hyun-Sung right now because doing this to me alone wouldn’t be enough to split us apart.

It was just a guess, but I couldn’t help but think that perhaps the woman who had approached Kim Hyun-Sung when we first arrived was with him.

‘Kylie Yale?’

I had seen her with Kim Hyun-Sung a few times after their first meeting.

‘I’m ninety percent sure that she’s with him right now… ’

* * *

“Are you alone today as well? Master of the Blue Guild?” Kylie asked.

“*Ah*, Miss Kylie,” Kim Hyun-Sung greeted.

“You must be tired from all the work,” she said.

“I’m used to it. What brings you here today?” he asked.

“You seemed like you haven’t eaten yet, so I thought we should eat together. You eat late, don’t you? If it’s not too much trouble… how about we eat at the Blue Guild’s cafeteria? If it’s uncomfortable for you, I can just go—”

“It’s fine. I actually have something I need to tell you, so let’s go there and eat. I’ll lead the way,” Kim Hyun-Sung interrupted.

“Thank you, Guild Master of Blue,” said Kylie.

---

1. This is when a woman has sex with a man, and the woman will ask the man whatever she wants. ☜

CHAPTER 472
DRIVING A WEDGE (3)

Kim Hyun-Sung, the Guild Master of the Blue Guild…

Kim Hyun-Sung's job was unknown, but it was highly likely that he was a swordsman. His weapon was an Above-Legendary weapon, and his job was probably Legendary as well. I[1] presumed that his agility stat was over 90 points, and despite his close-ranged job, he had a high magic stat. There wasn't much information about him, so it was hard to figure out his personality.

Everyone also knew that he spent most of his time training and working, so he barely has any free time. What stood out the most was that he would avoid drinking with a woman as a typical model student.

Lee Ki-Young, the Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild, Hero of Laios, the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country, and a dragon's chosen.

He was with Kim Hyun-Sung during the tutorial dungeon, and he cleared the dungeon with Jung Ha-Yan, the mage, and Park Deok-Gu, the tank of the Blue Guild's First Party.

I presumed that he was a Legendary alchemist at the very least, but the exact name of his job was unknown. His physical stat was low, but I presumed that he had a holy power stat of at least 95 points.

He was a devout follower of Benigoa, and he liked talking to people, regardless of their status. He often did volunteer work and was a righteous person with a selfless devotion to sacrifice himself for others.

I couldn't help but smile upon recalling the report I had read earlier.

'Geez… I'm not sure how people like them managed to get this far.'

One guy was a nerd who only cared about work and training, while the other was a priest with the tendency to sacrifice himself for others.

It was so shocking that I couldn't help but be surprised by how they managed to survive and grow this much on this continent. They were known as the duo with enough power to control the entire continent, but I was disappointed by their ordinariness.

Obviously, power was important in this world, and I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung's power had helped in increasing their reputation. However, power wasn't enough to survive in this world.

I had no idea what exactly happened in the Sacred Democratic Country, but it was safe to presume that humans would be the same no matter where they were.

Naturally, I got curious about how they managed to grow this much and become known as one of the three major guilds of Lindel.

The intelligence division actually looked into that part and was able to obtain a lot of information.

I felt kind of disappointed when I heard the reason, but we also screamed in delight.

'The Red Mercenary Guild and the Black Swan Guild.'

Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo, the Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild, and Lee Ki-Young and Cha Hee-Ra, the Mercenary Queen, were close to each other. There wasn't a lot of information regarding Kim Hyun-Sung and Park Yeon-Joo, but on the other hand, we had received information that Lee Ki-Young and the Mercenary Queen knew each other when they were still on Earth.

I finally understood why the Black Swan Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild temporarily set aside their rivalry to work together with the Blue Guild.

'It's not even funny.'

The reason was ridiculous and shocking, but it was good enough for us to dig even deeper. Naturally, we discovered that the duo of the Blue Guild was at the center of Lindel, so if we managed to split them apart, then the Blue Guild's power would split into two as well.

It was possible that the Black Swan Guild and the Red Mercenary Guild would start fighting each other again, which would cause the collapse of the Great City Lindel

Alliance.

The news would definitely make the other nations, cities, and guilds erupt into cheers.

'Are we just going to watch as the three major guilds of Lindel monopolize every market out there?'

One of the authoritative figures of the other nations probably had that thought.

'I feel kind of bad, but it can't be helped. We need to split you apart for us to have room to breathe… ' I inwardly said and chuckled to myself. Of course, I couldn't actually laugh because I was currently working on splitting them up.

"As expected, the Blue Guild is amazing," I complimented.

"That's not true, Miss Kylie Yale," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"No, it's truly amazing. It has only been five days, but the joint training's scale is already this massive… Did you bring all the supplies from Lindel?" I asked.

"Yes. We tried not to bring too much, but Mr. Ki-Young doesn't like to see the guild staff members suffer…" he replied.

'How nice of him… '

"The supplies we brought here are actually the surplus from Rift Land. They're mass-produced, so they can be assembled with a simple magic spell. You're using a crude tent right now, but you and the other guilds will soon be living in a building like this," said Kim Hyun-Sung.

"What? Is that true?" I asked.

"Yes," he answered.

"W-What about… the cost…" I asked.

"You don't have to worry about that. We have already agreed that the Blue Guild will take care of everything," he answered.

“Is that… really okay?” I questioned.

“Right now, the Continental Joint Training is the top priority, and we need results. I hope that the others will only think about the training and nothing else, like what our guild has been doing so far. In addition, great sleep and great food will increase everyone’s efficiency and morale,” he replied.

‘They’re really rich.’

I couldn’t tell how much money they had.

‘They’re going to provide this for free?’

My jaw dropped unknowingly. He described it casually, but the building he said that he would provide to every guild here was a large and luxurious guild house.

It actually seemed bigger than our Manhattan Guild House back in the kingdom—no, I was sure that it was bigger than our main Guild House, and that wasn’t all…

He said that the building was mass-produced, but the materials used to create the building didn’t look cheap at all.

‘Magic? Or is it through alchemy?’

It didn’t really matter because all this was going to collapse anytime soon.

‘He’s really a pushover… ’

I could swear that there wasn’t anyone out there who was as nice as them.

Lee Ki-Young built a dorm so that the useless guild staff members of the Blue Guild wouldn’t suffer, while Kim Hyun-Sung provided everything for free so that the joint training would go smoothly.

I actually couldn’t help but think that they were idiots.

‘That’s probably why they’re being tricked like idiots right now.’

The result wasn’t there just yet, but I could already deduce what was going to happen because our plan was already in progress.

There wasn't much information about Kim Hyun-Sung, which was a bit disappointing, but that wasn't the case for Lee Ki-Young. I had already figured out his overall personality, and I was actually slowly getting influenced by his personality.

'Who could have known that it would be this easy?'

Innocent people had always been the easiest to corrupt. Therefore, Lee Ki-Young was the perfect target for us to corrupt. I didn't really care if his goal was to preach or whatever, but he was the type of person who liked spending time with other people.

No, he actually seemed like the type who would easily get swayed by the words of other people and the type who would have a difficult time declining the requests of other people.

At last, it finally became clear why the senators of the Sacred Democratic Country liked him a lot.

'It's definitely because he's easy to manipulate.'

That was probably the reason why he had gotten invited to many different events all over the nation. However, it was a bit surprising that he was able to maintain his righteousness and innocence despite being manipulated by other people all this while.

'Righteous and innocent? Bullshit. A person like that doesn't exist in this world.'

I was convinced that Lee Ki-Young only managed to remain that way until now was that he had no access to them. Whether it was alcohol, women, or drugs—I was confident that I could provide him with a *good* time, which was incomparable to the tea time he would often have with the nobles of the Sacred Democratic Country.

Surprisingly, my presumption ended up being correct…

Lee Ki-Young was pretty passive on the first and second days, but from the third day onwards, he definitely started enjoying himself because he was hanging out with those scums, even though he didn't even get invited.

If the citizens of the Sacred Democratic Country had seen him, they would have definitely rubbed their eyes in disbelief.

I was sure that they would find it hard to imagine the Honorary Cardinal Lee Ki-Young being drunk, being touchy-feely with a woman, spitting out all sorts of dirty remarks, and revealing a sleazy smile.

It had only been five days, but the white canvas named Lee Ki-Young was already being tainted black.

'If I'm lucky, I could turn him into a puppet… '

It was simple. I could spike his drink or use a woman.

Obviously, we would only use those methods after he completely split up with Kim Hyun-Sung, but they would soon split up, so it wouldn't be too early to think of the apropos method to turn him into a puppet.

Kim Hyun-Sung would continuously hear bad things about Lee Ki-Young, and he would get disappointed with the latter.

I looked around while talking with Kim Hyun-Sung and saw we were already about to arrive at the restaurant. It was completely different from the cafeteria used by the common soldiers, so I couldn't help but gasp. I saw people eating with each other.

There was a pale woman and a large-framed man in front of a table. Someone had their hair tied up, while there was also someone who looked like a student.

They were obviously…

'The elites of the Blue Guild… '

It was Jung Ha-Yan, Park Deok-Gu, and the party members of the Blue Guild's First Party.

They were the ones who displayed monster-like results during the mock battles.

They had to have finished eating because I saw them quietly greeting us with their eyes.

I did flinch for a moment, but I didn't think that it was a big deal because I wasn't here to do anything bad.

“Please have a seat. They’ll bring out the food soon,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Thank you for being considerate, Guild Master of Blue,” I told him.

“No, I should be the one thanking you, Miss Kylie Yale. I actually wanted to thank you because I feel like you’ve been helping with the training all this while,” he said.

“No. It’s nothing compared to what the three major guilds of Lindel are providing us. What our guilds have been doing all this while are trivial…” I muttered.

“Your serious participation in the training is—”

“Of course. You worked hard to set up this joint training, so we should do our best to grow as much as we can while the training is ongoing. The atmosphere is kind of disorderly, but I’m sure everyone will get used to it soon enough,” I interrupted him.

“That would be nice…” he commented.

“I’ll be helping you,” I added.

“I’m truly grateful that the Manhattan Guild has been taking the training seriously. Please eat, Miss Kylie,” he said.

“Do you always eat this late?” I asked.

“I usually eat later than this. It gets really late by the time I finish my work, so recently, I’ve been trying to eat simple dishes. If you hadn’t come, then I would’ve eaten something simple tonight as well,” he replied.

“You should eat whenever you can. You’re not the only one who’s working, and you have Father Lee Ki-Young as well,” I pointed out.

“Mr. Ki-Young is—”

“Now that I think about it, I haven’t seen him lately. Does he go to sleep early?” I asked.

“No, I’m sure he’s with the others right now. Recently, he’s been getting close with the people from the other regions…” he answered.

"*Ah*… so the rumors were true," I commented.

"Rumors?" he asked.

"You haven't heard of them?" I asked.

"I don't know what you're talking about…" he said.

'I should use a soundproofing spell here… '

"I'm not sure if it's okay to tell you this, but… recently, it seems like Father Lee Ki-Young has been hanging out with the wrong people," I started.

"What?"

The more exaggerated a rumor was, the more effective it would be…

"The people here aren't as nice as you. They're from the same city as us… have you heard of Sir Gellahan?" I asked.

"I think… I've heard of him," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"Actually, he's a famous troublemaker even in our region. He's skilled, but… his personality isn't… that great… I think Mr. Lee Ki-Young has been spending time with him and his people… He still hasn't participated in the training as well, and this is just a baseless rumor, but there have been rumors that he has been bringing women into his room…"

"Of course, I don't actually believe that he would do something like that, but have there been any instances where he didn't come back to the guild house, especially in the past few days?" I asked.

"…"

I was sure that this was more than enough to stupefy the huge nerd standing in front of me.

As expected, I saw his dark expression, but for some reason, I started trembling.

'Huh?'

A voice rang in my head, but it didn't belong to Kim Hyun-Sung. The voice reminded me of a buzzing television, and it made me feel a shiver down my spine as goosebumps broke out all over me.

— That… r-r-rumor… who did you… hear it from?

---

1. Kylie's POV ☜

CHAPTER 473
DRIVING A WEDGE (4)

'What the…? How is she doing this…? Is this even possible?'

Obviously, I[1] thought I was hearing things because Kim Hyun-Sung continued eating as if he couldn't hear anything, but more importantly, I didn't understand what was going on.

'What's going on?'

The voice asked me as if they had been listening to our conversation.

— I-I-I asked you where you heard that rumor. *Ah*… I suppose it's hard to answer r-right now. I-It's my mistake. It's probably faster if I ask you in person.

'How did she hear me? Wait, is this even magic?'

I had no idea what kind of magic was being employed here. I could feel the voice's apprehension, so I was sure that it wasn't just telepathy. I was even more surprised because there were no traces of mana in the air, and there was also a soundproofing spell around me and Kim Hyun-Sung.

I could see that there was nothing wrong with the soundproofing spell, so no one should have been able to hear our conversation. I thought about how the other party had to be using her unique ability or something, but I had never heard of a unique ability that could do something like this.

Naturally, I felt uncomfortable because the strange voice gave me goosebumps as well.

'Who is it?'

I looked around because I was curious about who was talking to me, but the only people here were the few party members of the Blue Guild and Kim Hyun-Sung.

“Miss Kylie, is something wrong?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“No, Mr. Hyun-Sung… More importantly, just now…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“I-It’s nothing,” I stuttered.

‘Shit. What’s going on?’

“I’d like to hear more details about the thing you mentioned earlier… The one about Mr. Ki-Young being close to Gellahan of Hellfire…” he requested.

“As I’ve mentioned before, he’s not the greatest person. I thought it was just my misunderstanding, but after seeing your expression, I don’t think that’s the case anymore. Are you worried about something?” I asked.

“Not really, but there’s something else I’m a bit worried about… He has been returning to the guild drunk more often recently. I feel like he’s been overdoing it more than usual. He has always been attending the mock battles and joint training…” he answered.

“Then, the rumors…” I mentioned.

“No, I’m sure that’s not the case. Mr. Ki-Young enjoys meeting people, but he’s very strict about taking care of himself, so I’m sure that he’s not doing the things you’re thinking about,” he said.

“I see. Of course, I only mentioned it out of concern for you. I was worried that you might get caught up on the honorary cardinal’s bad rumors… He’s a pillar of the Sacred Democratic Country, so the bad rumors could ruin his image…”

”The rumors were probably spread by someone with ill intent. Of course, the content of the rumors is a bit bothersome to consider it just a simple rumor…” I trailed off.

“…”

“I think it’d be best if you keep an eye on him for a bit and then talk to him once you get worried. Issues like this have to be sorted out with a conversation,” I suggested.

— C-C-Come to the bathroom. If you don't, bad things will happen. Y-You have to come to no matter what. If you don't come, I'll come to you. Hurry up and come.

'What the hell is going on?'

I heard the voice once again, and I couldn't find the owner of the voice. I thought that it wouldn't really matter if I were to ignore the voice but for some reason…

'I have a really bad feeling about doing that.'

I thought that it would be best for me to meet them, but of course, my conscience was telling me that I shouldn't do that. My conscience was telling me to ignore the voice inside my head and that I would be safe. However, I wanted to know the owner of the voice as well. I felt like an extra from a cheap, B-rated horror movie that was intentionally walking into danger to kick-start the plot.

'This nerd probably knows something.'

However, I didn't want to complicate the issue…

— -I-I just want to ask you a few questions.

It could be a trap, or the Blue Guild might be up to something after discovering our plans. If that wasn't the case, then this could be the machinations of a different guild. I wasn't in our Manhattan Guild House, so I couldn't completely put my guard down.

However, I would be jumping to conclusions if I assumed that the Blue Guild was trying to get rid of me within their own guild house. In addition, I was also confident that even if the voice belonged to an enemy, I was fairly sure that they wouldn't hurt me.

— I don't like that you're s-s-slow…

"…"

'I'll just follow my instincts.'

I had no choice but to stand up because the owner of the voice wanted to talk to me.

"Excuse me…" I said.

"*Ah*, sure."

I couldn't help but gulp a mouthful of my own saliva when I started walking.

I didn't want to leave the impression that I would dine and dash, but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that I had reached my goal with Kim Hyun-Sung to some extent. Of course, I didn't really achieve that much.

'However, the foundation has already been laid out.'

I could take my sweet time with it because I still had a lot of time and opportunities.

Right now, it was more important for me to know the owner of the voice.

I continued walking and eventually saw my destination. I took a deep breath and opened the door. I saw a familiar face behind the door. Well, I couldn't really say that she was familiar because this would be my first time speaking to her face-to-face.

'Jung Ha-Yan.'

The talented great mage of the Blue Guild. The Blue Guild was basically split between Lee Ki-Young and Kim Hyun-Sung. However, she was one of the many people whom the many guilds had their eyes on. She wasn't one of the Eight Seats, but she was one of the strongest mages on the continent.

I walked in front of the sink while glancing at her, and I heard her talking to me.

"Y-You came. I'm glad," Jung Ha-Yan commented.

"So it was you…" I said.

"*Ah*, yes. I-I'm sorry for the s-sudden request. Well, it's because I was really curious…" she said.

"How were you able to penetrate the soundproofing spell? And did you just project your thoughts into my head? Is it because you have a unique ability or a special type of magic that allows you to do that? Wait, maybe it's a spell—Actually, why—"

"I-It's difficult… to explain… I-I'll tell you later. I… a-asked first. Right? I'm the one who a-asked the question first. Right? Right?" she interrupted.

"*Ah*, right. So your question is…" I muttered.

"That… rumor. Where did you hear it from?" she asked.

"Which…"

"The rumor about my oppa spending time with bad people," she replied.

"…"

"You said he spent time with b-bad women every night. T-That he gets drunk every night, r-right?" she continued.

"I'm not sure. I can't recall exactly where I heard it from…" I answered.

'She's kind of weird? Is she a psychopath?'

I couldn't really describe it, but it seemed like she had a loose screw.

'People said she was a genius… '

I would be more convinced if someone told me that she was anything but a genius.

She was trembling as if she had caught a bad cold, and her eyes were bloodshot. Her skin had become really pale, and she was pouting. The way she kept stuttering also made it seem like she was suffering from a mental breakdown.

I knew she was strange the moment I met her, but the sight in front of me made me realize that she wasn't normal at all.

"T-Then it could be a lie. I'm sure it's a baseless rumor," she commented.

'Idiots are easy to use… I wonder if I can use her… '

"Who knows? I don't think that it's a completely baseless rumor because he hasn't been returning to the guild dorm By the way, what's your relationship with the honorary cardinal?" I asked.

"W-We l-l-love each other…" Jung Ha-Yan replied.

“I heard he’s dating the Mercenary Queen…” I pointed out.

“D-Don’t talk about that woman. I… really don’t like Cha Hee-Ra. More importantly… where did you hear that rumor from? Who saw it? W-Who heard that rumor?” she asked again.

“I heard it from others as well, so I don’t know the details, but I’m pretty sure that it’s true. The people the honorary cardinal has been spending time with aren’t the greatest people out there…” I answered.

“You’re not lying… r-right?” she asked.

“Why would I lie?” I asked back.

“D-Do you know what kind of women they are? Where are they from?” she questioned.

“No, I don’t know the details…” I replied.

“W-W-Why don’t you know anything? A-A-Are you sure you’re not lying? I really don’t like liars. Especially lies like this…” she said.

“The possibility that it’s a lie is—”

I couldn’t continue.

‘Huh?’

When my eyes met Jung Ha-Yan’s eyes, the bathroom became inexplicably dark.

I had no idea what was going on, but my arms were assaulted with a pain that was so sharp I felt like they had gotten severed in an instant. I wanted to scream, but my voice wouldn’t come out.

A sharp pain struck my abdomen as well, and I could feel the contents of my abdomen spilling out and falling to the floor.

The sharp wind flying around me simultaneously gave me a thousand cuts.

It happened in the blink of an eye and without any forewarning.

'Ah, ahhhhhh!'

My muscles and skin were ripped apart. I felt like collapsing to the floor in a heap as my flesh was turning into mincemeat.

In fact, I felt like I had become nothing but a lump of meat.

'K-Kill me. Kill me…!'

It was unimaginable, and I also couldn't explain what was happening to me. I tried to move, but I couldn't even scream, not to mention move. The crazy woman before me screamed, and she started stabbing at random.

Sqwelp! Shunk! Plorkk!

'Please stop… Please. It's. My… fault…!'

A minute later, I woke up and started vomiting violently.

"*Bleeeck!*"

I frantically groped around myself and my arm. I groped around desperately while trying to stop myself from vomiting again. I groped around because I wanted to know what happened and if my limbs were still intact.

'What did I see just now? What the hell was that?'

The phenomenon I had just witnessed was unexplainable.

I couldn't even understand it, not to mention explain it.

Perhaps it was the aftereffect of the scene I had witnessed just now, but my legs were trembling. My knees eventually felt weak, and I collapsed to the floor to sit on my own vomit as I continued crying.

I obviously had no idea what was going on, but there was one thing I knew for sure.

The perpetrator of the horrible scene just now was right in front of me.

"Tell me the truth right now! Y-You weren't lying, right?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

I had long realized that there was something wrong. Everything—my plan to create a rift between Lee Ki-Young and Kim Hyun-Sung so that the three major guilds of Lindel would collapse—disappeared. They all disappeared.

No, If I wanted to survive, then I had to forget them.

I couldn't care less about anything else. The baseless rumor that I had casually spread as if it was a joke had to become the truth. It was imperative that I do that so that I wouldn't experience the same thing I had experienced just now.

"Yes… P-Probably," I replied.

I felt like I was falling into an endless pit. Now, all I could do was hope that the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country—the symbol of righteousness—would fall into depravity on his own.

---

1. Kylie's POV ☜

CHAPTER 474
DRIVING A WEDGE (5)

“Don’t you think they’ve been acting a bit too obvious recently?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“Who?” I[1] asked.

“What do you mean, who? I’m obviously talking about those people whom you have been hanging out with,” she replied.

“*Ah*, them. Well, you don’t really have to worry about them,” I told her.

“Are you sure?” she asked.

“The things they’ve been doing recently are actually cute, and they actually don’t need to do anything extreme. If anything, they’ll be moving more cautiously than us because once they get caught, they’re the ones who will get in trouble,” I answered.

“Then, I suppose we can say that things are going smoothly. Aside from Kim Hyun-Sung’s end,” she commented.

“Things are going smoothly with H-Hyun-Sung as well,” I stuttered.

“Yeah, right. You were honestly thinking the same thing. Even if you give them crumbs like this, it won’t change anything. The Blue Guild is overflowing with money, but I just can’t understand the guild’s decision to build a shelter for free. You have no idea how hard I had to work to stop Yeon-Joo unni when she said she wanted to help. The Black Swan Guild isn’t as rich as the Blue Guild, and we just recently established a few businesses of our own…” she explained.

“…”

“It doesn’t seem like the Blue Guild is doing this to establish a great image to the public. I also honestly think that the Blue Guild had already reached the limit when it comes to having a good image. If you think this kind of benefit will increase the quality of the training here, you’re making a huge mistake. A few groups will

obviously think that the Blue Guild is a big pushover, and I think that sums it up," she continued.

"Still, there are people who have been doing really well, so it's not like it's completely ineffective. Of course, there aren't many people like them," I told her.

"Do you know how funny it is to see you trying to protect him? It's already been a few days… you've already wasted a few days. Are you sure it's okay to do this?" she asked.

'No… I don't think I should be doing this… Ji-Hye.'

I had been trying to stand on Kim Hyun-Sung's side, but I couldn't help but have the same thoughts as Lee Ji-Hye. I wasn't sure if he simply needed time to fix the situation, but I was honestly feeling frustrated.

Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't really saying anything and was insisting on handling things on his own.

He managed to come up with a solution to improve the gloomy atmosphere of the joint training by building temporary guild houses and dorms for the people here under the Blue Guild's name. Of course, his generosity also involved food and various supplies.

I could feel that he was determined in his goal to make anyone not worry about anything else aside from training. Unfortunately, his plan wasn't going to work. Kim Hyun-Sung's plan would help those who had always been determined to become even stronger.

However, the lazy people were against Kim Hyun-Sung's solution.

Kim Hyun-Sung thought things would start changing as long as he worked hard because he actually got even busier. On top of his training and administrative work, he started teaching swordsmanship to other guilds and clans, which lasted until late into the night.

I felt bad for him, but his actions were somewhat effective.

His swordsmanship class started off with only a few people, but the number of people started to increase, and they were increasingly becoming more passionate as

time went on.

Of course, it would be strange if there weren't any results considering how his class was populated by people who wanted to learn swordsmanship.

Naturally, news about Kim Hyun-Sung's classes started to spread, and the result was better than we had expected. However, a few influential figures started questioning if this was Kim Hyun-Sung's plan to poach their talented adventurers away from them.

In the end, the guilds prohibited their members from going to the training hall. It was actually a funny situation because the guilds wouldn't even allow their guild members to train anymore.

The only people who remained in Kim Hyun-Sung's class were the passionate adventurers. There were also a few guilds who requested to learn from Kim Hyun-Sung to improve their embarrassing swordsmanship.

We wanted their passion to spread throughout the entire continent, but of course, a miracle like that would only happen in comics.

As time passed, the people started to become lazier, and a few groups actually started acting as if they had come here for reserve force training rather than for joint training to face the threat looming over the continent.

I wasn't sure about what Kim Hyun-Sung truly felt, but I couldn't just watch anymore.

'Tsk… '

There was a small number of people who had been profiting from all this, but most people were bearish.

Therefore, I was convinced that the utopia filled with passion, tenacity, and hard work that Kim Hyun-Sung had envisioned would never come true.

I was sure that he was starting to realize that it would never come true.

'He's probably frustrated, too.'

We were providing them with a ton of support, but the people were starting to become even lazier. It got even worse because the people were starting to make

excuses just to avoid fighting the Great City Lindel Alliance and the Blud Guild in mock battles.

They were obviously boycotting us under the facade of prioritizing their party members' health.

Cha Hee-Ra made the situation even more depressing by telling us that she also didn't want to participate because it was too boring. Of course, her party members wouldn't participate as well.

At this point, even Elena and the other races were only training as a formality. I didn't even have to attend the joint training to know that the overall atmosphere of the joint training was gloomy.

"And those scums are still driving a wedge. They're not as scummy compared to you, so I'm sure that they look cute in your eyes," Lee Ji-Hye said sarcastically.

'That's really harsh, Ji-Hye.'

"Are you still playing along with them?" she asked.

"I might get something useful out of it, so I'm just testing the waters for now. I still haven't figured out how many people are on their side. I don't think Hyun-Sung is aware of it, and I'm sure he hasn't said anything because he trusts me that much," I replied.

"He sure trusts you a lot. Honestly, your recent lifestyle is the hallmark of hopeless trash, but despite that, he still trusts you a lot," she remarked.

"They're scum, but they're not completely useless. I'm sure Hyun-Sung is thinking that I have a plan in mind," I told her.

"*Hm*… oppa," Lee Ji-Hye suddenly called out.

"Yeah?"

"Can I take care of this?" she requested.

"How?" I asked.

“I’m not sure yet. I’ll keep it a secret for now. I honestly can’t guarantee its success, but it doesn’t mean that I don’t have a contingency plan in mind. All you have to do is act like your usual self. Actually, you should spend more time with those guys,” she replied.

‘I don’t think I’ll lose anything from that… ’

Lee Ji-Hye should be able to pull it off, and it was even more reassuring because she volunteered for it. For now, I thought that it wouldn’t be bad for me to agree to her proposal. I felt kind of suspicious about how she would handle the issue.

However, a few hours later, Park Deok-Gu suddenly came running to me.

When I saw Park Deok-Gu, I instantly saw through her plan.

‘She’s really smart.’

“Hyung-nim… is it true that you might be leaving the Blue Guild?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

‘So this was her plan… ’

I couldn’t help but smile.

“Is it true?” he demanded.

“It’s a baseless rumor. Who told you that?” I asked.

“Well, I’m not sure who started the rumor, but… I’ve been hearing that everywhere,” he replied.

I wasn’t sure why I didn’t manage to think of that plan before Lee Ji-Hye did, which made me feel that I was kind of dumb.

It turned out that the solution was a lot easier and more obvious than I thought.

I hadn’t really discussed the issue with Kim Hyun-Sung yet because I wanted him to feel exhausted to the point that he would start talking about it with me first. Therefore, I thought that it would be the best choice for me to just wait.

The solution I had come up with would eventually take effect given enough time, but the wait was undeniably frustrating.

Lee Ji-Hye's solution was extremely simple.

'Actively respond to the big picture that those scummy bastards have in mind… '

Basically, the best choice was to pretend that we had fallen into the conflict that they had been wanting to create between Kim Hyun-Sung and me.

Lee Ji-Hye had to have spread rumors that Lee Ki-Young was thinking badly of the Blue Guild and Kim Hyun-Sung.

Obviously, Kim Hyun-Sung still had no idea of the third party that was trying to split the Blue Guild apart, but I was sure that he would quickly notice what was going on.

He would surely notice that there was something wrong, and I was sure that he would notice that the situation was a bit unnatural as well.

Of course, I felt a bit nervous about all this, but it was worth a try. I had to make our Hyun-Sung feel disappointed in the people who were ruining the atmosphere of the joint training, and I also had to make him feel that there was another solution to the issue.

He had to realize that the group supporting him physically and mentally were actually the ones who were trying to split both of us apart and that I was being affected by their efforts to create conflict between us.

Once he realized what was going on, I was sure that he would be furious. After all, even Buddha would be angry at what was going on, not to mention Kim Hyun-Sung.

'Hyun-Sung is really kind, but he'll be an idiot if he just stands by without doing anything about all this.'

At this point, I was sure that there wasn't a more convincing method than this.

We had slightly grown apart recently because we were busy, but Kim Hyun-Sung definitely treasured me more than anyone else, and even if that wasn't the case, I was still very important to the guild, so I was sure that he would do something about it.

Naturally, I started talking as if there wasn't anything going on.

"That's nonsense."

"Are you sure?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

I deliberately gave Park Deok-Gu a vague answer.

"My contract isn't over yet, and even if I leave the Blue Guild now, I have nowhere else to go. I don't know the details of what you heard but don't worry about it, Deok-Gu. Just focus on your training," I replied.

"*Ugh*…"

"What did you hear exactly?" I asked.

"It wasn't much. I heard a rumor about you spending time with bad people and that you were leaving Lindel because of that. I also heard that… you might join the federation because you're disappointed in the Blue Guild's current state. Did you quarrel with our bro, hyung-nim?" he asked.

"We're too old to quarrel," I replied.

"I'm not talking about a petty quarrel. I'm asking if you two quarreled because your opinions differed from each other," he said.

"Not really…" I muttered.

"That's a relief…"

I couldn't help but inwardly nod upon hearing Park Deok-Gu's words detailing the rumors. From what I had heard so far, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to presume that Lee Ji-Hye and I had the same plan in mind.

However, the part that made me feel uncomfortable was that Park Deok-Gu knew a bit too much.

'Is this normal? What is she thinking?'

Whenever someone wanted to spread a particularly nasty rumor, they would tend to

be cautious and spread that rumor over an extended period of time. It was all because if one were to spread a rumor too fast, people would get suspicious and track the source.

Of course, there was no way that Lee Ji-Hye would make that kind of rookie mistake, so I was sure that she had spread the rumor slowly but in a way that would eventually become a ubiquitous topic among the members of the public.

'But how does this pig know so much? It's as if he heard it himself.'

I knew he was sensitive to gossip, but…

'Does he have some kind of special ability related to gossip?'

I discreetly activated Mind's Eye, but Park Deok-Gu's details hadn't really changed. In that case, it should be safe to presume that Park Deok-Gu was simply a talent at collecting gossip.

I couldn't help but be even more convinced of that idea because it hadn't been that long since Lee Ji-Hye went outside. Park Deok-Gu had collected the gossip so fast that I couldn't help but start doubting if he had his own guild that gathered intel for him.

'I wonder if he's affiliated with an intelligence guild or something… '

I was just joking, but it made sense when I thought about his previous achievement.

'I sometimes get suspicious that he might be a regressor as well.'

---

1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

CHAPTER 475
DRIVING A WEDGE (6)

Park Deok-Gu had absorbed the rumor as if he were a sponge, but it took some time for the rumor to spread. It was slow, like what Lee Ji-Hye had intended, but it was true that the rumor was spreading.

Of course, I had no choice but to stop Park Deok-Gu from talking because if someone were to intervene, then the issue could become even more complicated.

The rumor spread from the bottom to the top. The rumor with an unknown source started from either the training hall or the dorms, and the rumor soon reached the ears of the executive-level adventurers. Naturally, people started investigating it even further, especially those who couldn't believe the rumor.

I was sure that it would take at least a few days for Kim Hyun-Sung to hear the rumor because he wasn't really the type to gather information.

'Seriously, what's up with Park Deok-Gu?'

It took quite a while before the rumors started spreading among the public, so I was once again stupefied when I recalled how Park Deok-Gu quickly heard the rumor. I seriously thought that he was making the Blue Guild's intelligence department work for him, so I got worried that he would start collecting even the useless rumors, but…

'It's strange, but he has a good eye for a decently credible rumor… '

I felt like he could do the work of two people on his own.

Anyway, everything was going smoothly, and there was even no need for me to check to know that the scums were celebrating in the joint training hall because dozens of guests visited my office every day.

Of course, the reason behind their visit was obvious.

"I think it'd be great if you could visit us after the joint training. There was a bit of

conflict between the Magic Kingdom and the Democratic Country, but it's all in the past now. It's not an exaggeration to say that the Magic Kingdom is a utopia for those with magic-related jobs because we have a well-established support system. I'm sure you'll be surprised once you've seen it yourself."

"The President of the Republic personally wrote the message, Father Lee Ki-Young. The letter is sealed, so I can't tell you anything about it, but he asked me to tell you that if there's anything you need, he'll do his best to provide it. And… this is his personal gift to you. It's an heirloom treasure of the Republic…"

"The North is kind of cold, but… the scenery is great. I'll get straight to the point. If you're thinking about moving, please consider the North. You can write whatever you want in the contract."

'The effect is bigger than I thought… '

I hadn't officially announced my departure from the Blue Guild, but many influential figures were already starting to recruit me. I even met people from the large guilds whose identities had been covered in a veil of secrecy until now.

Of course, I also received offers from many nations, and I was interested in their offers as well. Naturally, I told them that I wasn't interested in their offers, but most of them looked like they didn't believe what I said at all.

For them, my departure had already been decided.

I knew I was worth a lot, and I was really popular, but I couldn't have expected that I would have this much clout.

The President of the Republic, the Federal Leaders Alliance—even the Imperial Family of the Union of Kingdoms used the marriage card and urged me to become their son-in-law.

'It seems that Light Ki-Young's status is pretty high up there.'

It wasn't really strange considering the sacrifice that I had made for the continent so far, but the realization made me feel great regardless.

'I'm sure it's also because the rumor is extremely effective.'

I was sure that the rumor was extremely effective.

Of course, I also made sure that my actions were faithful to the rumor. These days, I had been spending less time at the portable guild house aside from when I had to meet Jung Ha-Yan or prepare for the training.

I didn't bother looking for Kim Hyun-Sung, so the rumor about the impending breakup between Kim Hyun-Sung, the Guild Master of the Blue Guild, and Lee Ki-Young, the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country, started spreading like wildfire.

At this point, I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung had to have already realized that something was off.

The majority of the guild members remained silent, but the atmosphere of the guild wasn't that great these days. I hadn't been seeing Kim Ye-Ri and Lee Chang-Ryeol lately, but considering that they were assassins, they were probably…

'They're probably on the move to gather information… '

I was sure of it, but…

'They're too slow… '

I could understand their slow reaction this time because I had always been the one managing the guild's intelligence department, so they were bound to slow down without my input. However, I still felt disappointed because they were *too* slow.

Anyway, the ongoing situation was definitely making Kim Hyun-Sung noticeably anxious, and the news I would receive about him at the end of the day had long become a type of enjoyment that I had been looking forward to hearing about lately.

I was being petty because I wanted him to suffer as much as me all this while, and it was really fun because it made me feel like I had the higher ground over him.

Of course, it didn't take him long to come to find me, but he definitely got concerned when he saw me acting ambiguously.

"Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Sung called out.

“Yes?” I replied.

“Can I come in?” he asked.

“Yes, come in, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” I answered.

“Excuse me.”

‘It’s definitely effective.’

He had definitely run all the way here, and I couldn’t help but feel that he had been reflecting on himself lately. Of course, I knew what was wrong with him.

After all, it hadn’t been that long since he had confessed to Bitcherella that he had been staying away from me because he was suffering from PTSD. He had also confessed to Bitcherella that he was the problem rather than me.

However, the issue was that he hadn’t really talked about that with me, so right now, he was currently in a confusing situation where he had to figure out why I was trying to stay away from him, just like the dilemma I had to agonize over prior to Bitcherella’s appearance.

He had apologized to me by giving me gifts, but we were still distant compared to when we were really close back then. Of course, we were still close on the surface, but I was sure that he could feel a strange distance between us.

There was an apropos saying to describe this situation—one should treat people well while one could still do it.

‘Yep, that definitely fits the current situation.’

The decision still hadn’t been made, but I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung could feel that the saying was really appropriate in his current situation. Before Bitcherella appeared, I was desperate, but now, it was Kim Hyun-Sung’s time to feel desperate.

“I was actually finishing up the tasks that I’ve been putting off. I feel like it’s been a while since we’ve seen each other since we’re really busy recently,” I said.

“Yes, we’re really busy… Are you going out today as well?” he asked.

“I think so. There are still some people whom I haven’t met just yet. Sir Gellahan said that he wanted to introduce me to other people. It’s honestly kind of tiring, but… it’s my chance to create meaningful connections. Speaking of Sir Gellahan…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“He seemed like a very influential figure. He has many connections and is involved in many types of businesses, so I think he’ll be helpful,” I continued.

“I see…” he muttered.

He looked sad for some reason.

‘I wonder how much he knows… ’

I was kind of curious.

‘He’s definitely aware of the rumor that is making the rounds right now.’

It shouldn’t be that hard to deduce what was going on. I would be really disappointed in him if he still hadn’t caught on to the reason why many influential figures were suddenly visiting my office in droves

‘Are you aware that there’s a third party involved?’

At this point, I was sure that Kim Ye-Ri and Lee Chang-Ryeol probably already knew, and it was probably the reason why Kim Hyun-Sung came here… He had a feeling, but he had no concrete evidence.

However, the timing was just right when I thought about how fast he was at completing his work. Of course, I couldn’t completely exclude the possibility that the intelligence department was slower than usual because I wasn’t there, but Kim Ye-Ri and Lee Chang-Ryeol weren’t that incompetent.

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung and saw that he looked like an anxious puppy.

He wasn’t really good at talking, so I was sure that he was thinking about how he should start asking questions.

I was sure that he was agonizing about how he should go about asking me if I were

really leaving the Blue Guild, what I had heard from Gellahan, why I was avoiding him these days, and if I was disappointed in the guild and him.

Of course, I was sure that he also wanted to know if I knew about the third party that was trying to destroy the Blue Guild.

“Mr. Ki-Young,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Yes?”

“You see…” he paused.

“Yes?”

“Recently…” he paused again.

“Yes.”

“So…”

“Yes…”

‘Shit, this is really frustrating.’

I couldn’t help but think that perhaps I should start the conversation.

I was about to say something, but Kim Hyun-Sung started talking.

“I heard a strange rumor.”

“I see. What kind of rumor is it?” I asked.

“Did… the Blue Guild or I do something to… disappoint you?” he asked.

‘So, he’s asking about this first.’

I couldn’t help but feel that it had taken him a great deal of courage to ask me that question. From the look on his face, it was clear that he was still hesitating if it was too early to ask about Kylie Yale, Gellahan, or Jamila.

'I'm sure he's aware, but he doesn't have concrete evidence.'

If he had concrete evidence, then I was sure that he would have approached me a bit aggressively, but he had come here as a good-natured Kim Hyun-Sung.

People were currently driving a wedge between us, but I could have never imagined that he would start our conversation by asking me that question first before anything else.

My heart broke when I saw him looking like a puppy that had been abandoned by its owner. I knew that I shouldn't feel this way, but I was starting to feel bad for him.

"It's nothing. It's not really a big problem, anyway. I'm very thankful to the guild and to you. The only reason I was able to get this far is all because of you, Mr. Hyun-Sung. If you hadn't saved me that day in the tutorial dungeon, then I'm sure that I wouldn't be here right now," I replied.

'Nice answer.'

My words made it seem like I was saying farewell, and Kim Hyun-Sung's face quickly became dyed with anxiety.

"I-It's nothing. I should be the one who should thank you, Mr. Ki-Young… It's actually embarrassing to hear that from you," he said.

"Anyway, many other things had happened as well. You recommended the alchemist job to me, and… I'm very thankful that you took me in despite my incompetence. Thank you for trusting me until the very end," I added.

'Look at your face, Hyun-Sung… '

I didn't really give him a proper answer, but I continued talking as if I were really going to move to a different guild and was now bidding goodbye.

I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung was feeling a sense of foreboding right now, and he started talking in a way that made it obvious that he was desperate.

"I-I heard you're preparing to join another guild. I also know that many guild masters have visited you recently."

"*Ah*…"

"…"

"I see…" he muttered.

"You don't have to concern yourself over it, but…" I trailed off.

"*Ah*… so, they're baseless rumors. I was getting a bit—"

"No, actually…" I interrupted.

"Sorry?" he asked.

"I can't say that it's a completely baseless rumor. Of course, I can't give you a definite answer just yet, but it's true that I've been thinking about it recently…" I replied.

"What?"

"I'm seriously thinking over their offers," I added.

"What?"

'What's with that look?'

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like the world was collapsing right in front of him.

CHAPTER 476
YOU DIDN'T DO THIS, RIGHT? (1)

'I had never seen that kind of look on Kim Hyun-Sung's face… '

It was actually shocking, considering his usual demeanor and attitude. It lasted only for a moment, but it was still undeniable that he had briefly failed to hide his emotions. I couldn't find the right words to describe how his jaw had dropped unknowingly.

However, the best way to describe it was that he looked like the world was collapsing right in front of him. He looked both shocked and sad at the same time, but there was also a tinge of complexity on his face.

Of course, his expression instantly returned to normal, but traces of stupefaction could still be seen in his demeanor. It couldn't be helped. He probably couldn't have expected that things would turn out this way.

'Yeah, it's understandable.'

He had heard the rumor, but I was sure that he thought the rumor was baseless because he and I had a bond. It wasn't strange for him to think that way because I had always been affectionate about Lindel and the Blue Guild.

He definitely thought that the rumor about me leaving the Blue Guild was a bunch of nonsense, and I was sure that he was hoping that I would say that the rumor was nothing more than a baseless rumor.

'It's just a baseless rumor… '

'There's no way that's true… '

However, I didn't refute the rumor.

The shock had to have been too much to bear because Kim Hyun-Sung looked like a husband who had been working hard to provide for his wife, but he suddenly

received a notice of divorce from his wife, who said that she was feeling tired and lonely because his husband kept on working hard.

'Happiness begins at home, Hyun-Sung.'

Kim Hyun-Sung tried his best to remain calm as he said, "What do you mean by you're seriously thinking over their offers?"

"It's exactly like I told you. I honestly wasn't planning on telling you like this since I haven't made my decision yet. I was going to tell you once I've made my decision, but you asked, so… I think it's best if I tell you now. Come to think of it, I think it's best to tell you right now. We have to decide on a successor, and my tasks have to be transferred as well, so I believe that this is the perfect timing," I replied.

"…"

"…"

"Y-You mean…" he stuttered.

"I'm sorry for telling you this out of the blue," I apologized.

"Is that… true?" he asked.

"Yes. I've been thinking about it for a few months now," I replied.

'I actually started thinking about it the moment you started avoiding me, Hyun-Sung.'

"…"

"I thought it wouldn't be so bad to start over at a new place. Many things happened up until now, and I'm a bit embarrassed to tell you this, but the Blue Guild doesn't need me anymore because it's already in a good place, so I thought that it would be best for me to go to a place where I'm needed more than here. At least, that's what I think," I continued.

"Th-That's not true. The Blue Guild is still growing, and there are many things we haven't taken care of yet… That's not the case," he said.

Our Hyun-Sung was really shocked. I could tell from his eyes that he was having

complicated thoughts. He wanted to stop me, but he couldn't make up his mind on what he should say.

It wasn't really strange because he had never been good at talking, and he stood there in a daze as if his head were struck by a blunt weapon. I wasn't sure if he was aware, but not only was he stuttering like Jung Ha-Yan, but he kept moving his fingers. His eyes darted around as well.

I wasn't used to this side of him, so he looked unfamiliar to me right now.

"It's… It's still too early. Of course, I understand what you're thinking, but…" Kim Hyun-Sung trailed off.

"…"

"D-Did I do something to upset you?" he asked.

Fortunately, he wasn't *that* slow-witted. It seemed that he finally started thinking that perhaps he was the reason why I was suddenly thinking about leaving.

'I'm sure something is pricking his consciousness.'

I was certain that he was recalling his biggest mistake—avoiding me.

Of course, I didn't say anything about that.

"Not really. As I said before, I'm thankful to you, Mr. Hyun-Sung…" I answered.

"Still… if there's something that has been bothering you, please tell me right away. No matter what it is, I'll do my best—no, I'll make sure to accommodate it. Please," he begged.

"Nothing has been decided yet. Despite what I said earlier, it's highly likely that I'll stay in the Blue Guild," I told him.

'I'm sure that he has at least caught on to the fact that I'm considering the matter of leaving… '

And it was obvious based on my actions so far…

“Still… if you need anything… I’ll try to accommodate it as much as I can. Come to think of it, your pay is really low compared to the amount of work you do… and you haven’t taken a proper vacation either. Everything you need will be provided by the guild—no, I’ll prepare them for you, so I ask that you think about it again after taking a break,” he suggested.

“No, there’s no need,” I said.

“The Blue Guild still needs you, Mr. Ki-Young. Actually, I need you more than the guild does,” he confessed.

‘Stop making comments that could cause a misunderstanding, Hyun-Sung.’

“I’m the guild master, but I don’t think I’m the only one who had contributed to the guild’s growth. I actually think that you’re the owner of the guild, so… I honestly don’t know how to respond because this is too sudden,” he said.

“You don’t have to worry so much,” I commented.

“But…”

“I’ll continue providing support so that the guild can continue the potion and Rift Museum business. I’m sure you won’t run into any problems financially. I’ll make sure that things will work out so that everything that I’m leaving behind will be maintained. There won’t be any issues, even if I’m not here anymore. It will be the same for the guild members. It’ll be a bit difficult to convince them, but I’ll talk to Ha-Yan and Elena so that they will remain in the guild…” I continued.

“No, I’m not telling you this because I’m worried about that. It’s not because of that…” he mumbled.

‘This is fun. I should have done this earlier… ’

“It’s not because I’m worried about those things… The guild’s businesses don’t really matter. That’s not the only thing I’m worried about,” he continued.

‘Why didn’t I do this earlier? Shit… ’

“*Ah!* If you are planning on transferring to another guild, can I ask which guild you’re planning on joining?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“I’m a bit cautious about this, but perhaps I’ll join the Federation…” I replied.

‘The answer is pretty obvious.’

“The Federation…” he repeated.

“I’m thinking about joining the Federal Leaders Alliance, where Sir Gellahan and Miss Jamila are from. I’m still thinking over which guild or clan I’m going to join, but as for the region, I’ll most likely head to the region where the Federal Leaders Alliance is based. The sea view there is apparently really beautiful,” I answered.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked troubled as if he had already known my answer.

I was sure that for him—the puzzle pieces in his head were coming together.

Since he already had a feeling about all of this, he could finally make a decision.

It was obvious why Lee Ki-Young, the man who loved both Lindel and the Sacred Democratic Country, was thinking about transferring to the federal region.

He tried to find the issue within himself, but since that wasn’t working, he probably started looking for an external reason, and I was sure that Gellahan of Hellfire and Jamila popped into his head the moment I mentioned the Federation was mentioned…

At this point, I was almost sure of it.

The pillar of the Blue Guild was suddenly thinking about transferring to another guild, and there were people trying to split us up.

It was pretty easy to deduce what was going on, and Kim Hyun-Sung looked sad for some reason upon realizing that.

Of course, I was curious about what Kim Hyun-Sung was going to do.

“They’re good people, unlike what the people here think about them. They’re very thoughtful, and even though they aren’t that… powerful, they still have potential. They’re having issues managing the Federal Leaders Alliance, so they asked me for help,” I continued.

“I see…” he said.

“Come to think of it, Isn’t Miss Kylie Yale part of the Federation? I’m talking about that woman who has been visiting you recently,” I asked.

‘What a coincidence, right, Hyun-Sung?’

“Yes, I’m sure she’s part of the Federation. I’m not sure if she’s busy these days, but she hasn’t really been visiting the guild…” he answered.

‘Well, I’m sure she won’t visit anymore. I’m sure she thinks that she has already achieved her goal.’

“In that case, you must’ve heard a lot about the Federation. To be honest, the Sacred Democratic Country knows the Federation the least among the many regions of the continent, and I think the Federation is a region full of interesting surprises…”

”I reckon that there are many interesting things that we can obtain from them. They still have uncleared dungeons as well. Of course, the Legendary and Epic dungeons are currently blocked off, but… Anyway, it’s been a while since we talked like this, and it was nice, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I’m sorry, but it’s time for me to head out…” I told him.

“*Ah*, I’m sorry. I took up too much…”

“No, that’s not true. I enjoyed our time together. *Ah!* Until I’ve made my decision, please don’t tell the guild members or anyone outside the guild. We still have the joint training, and I’m worried that the news will cause chaos. I’m sure you already know, but there are people in our guild who are easily rattled by bad news,” I requested.

“…”

“Especially Deok-Gu and Ha-Yan. Please don’t tell them,” I added.

“Okay.”

“Then… I’ll be heading out first,” I told him.

“Alright.”

'Hyun-Sung, this breaks my heart a bit, but this is all for you. I believe you know better than I do about what you should do… '

Our conversation ended with mixed feelings from both sides, and I had just basically told him that I was still thinking over the offers.

My expression was impeccable throughout the conversation, and I walked past him as if this would be our final conversation.

Kim Hyun-Sung didn't do anything other than stare at me with a complicated look.

However, he was probably going to—no, I was sure that he would do his best to figure out the truth behind the matter. He simply *looked* that desperate in my eyes. In addition to investigating the Federation, he would definitely do his best to stop me from leaving.

I was curious about how he would respond after finding out that there was a third party that was driving a wedge between us.

I actually got a bit worried that he was just going to let me go, but when I saw his desperate look in our conversation just now, it seemed that I didn't have to worry about that.

Kim Hyun-Sung definitely had no intentions of letting me leave.

He looked like he would do everything in his power just to get me to stay. He had mentioned increasing my pay and giving me a vacation, but I couldn't help but wonder if he still had more up his sleeves.

Overall, I was enjoying all this.

The bait that I had thrown out ended up landing on the waters at the perfect time, so all I had to do now was wait.

Fortunately, I was sure that I wouldn't have to wait that long anymore like before. He would probably visit me again with an answer either today or tomorrow at the latest.

Kim Hyun-Sung was in a desperate situation, so he had to resolve the ongoing situation one way or another. There was a low chance of it happening, but he might

reveal to me that he was a regressor and use that to make me stay.

It was a bit of a stretch, but the regressor card did exist, and he had a reason to use it.

The overall situation wasn't that bad, and I couldn't help but think that everything was perfect until I heard a particular news exactly twenty-eight hours later.

"Sub Guild Master…"

"Yes?"

"The F-Federation…"

"*Huh?*"

"The Federation has fallen. We still have no idea what happened, but according to the rumors… one-fifth of the northern region is in ruins, and the damage is still accumulating as we speak… It is said that the North can no longer function as a nation."

The news was so unprecedented that it sounded like a curveball covered in bullshit.

'Hyun-Sung… Damn it… You didn't do this, right?'

I wanted to go over to him and ask.

CHAPTER 477
YOU DIDN'T DO THIS, RIGHT? (2)

I was happy to hear knocking on my door in the middle of the night. It was already three in the morning, but I became very emotional because I thought Kim Hyun-Sung was here to finally confess his sins.

I was sure that he was already at his wit's end in this game of playing hard to get. I was really excited to hear him confess because I heard that he got so devastated that he was actually having a hard time finishing his work.

He abruptly stopped his swordsmanship class, and he even stopped attending mock battles. In addition, he apparently got himself drunk last night until he collapsed. In the end, I thought that he was here to visit me because he couldn't take it anymore.

'Haaa. This is going to be difficult if he's drunk… '

Of course, my thoughts betrayed my feelings, so I was all smiles as I opened the door.

However, I saw Jonobono rather than Kim Hyun-Sung, and she brought with her a piece of news that I couldn't have expected at all.

"Sub Guild Master…" Jo Hye-Jin called out.

"Yes?"

"The F-Federation…"

"*Huh?*"

"The Federation has fallen. We still have no idea what happened, but according to the rumors… one-fifth of the northern region is in ruins, and the damage is still accumulating as we speak… It is said that the North can no longer function as a nation," she said.

'What kind of bullshit is that?'

What happened? The first person I thought of as the culprit was Kim Hyun-Sung. I felt a shiver down my spine as goosebumps broke out all over me, but I shook my head, thinking that it couldn't be him.

'There's no way… '

It was *possible,* considering the timing, but it would be a bit of a stretch to consider Kim Hyun-Sung as the culprit. The ongoing situation was starting to change the direction of everything, but it was changing in a direction that I couldn't have expected. Even Jonobono looked like she couldn't believe what she was saying.

"I know it's hard to believe, but it's true. Let's head out."

'Is this a hidden camera prank?'

I couldn't help but get suspicious that all this was a huge hidden camera prank that Kim Hyun-Sung had prepared as a prelude to a party that would prevent me from leaving.

Unfortunately, I had no time to think about what was going on. I tried to be optimistic by thinking that all this was just a prank, but when I saw the grim faces of the people upon entering the meeting room, I instantly realized that all this couldn't be a prank.

'This is serious… '

The soldiers and adjutants were running around frantically. The faces of the people in their seats were dyed with shock and anxiety. This joint training was to prepare for the upcoming threat, but no one expected that the threat *actually* existed.

The leaders of the Federation reacted more aggressively than the other regions.

"Father Lee Ki-Young."

"*Ah*, Sir Gellahan," I greeted.

"W-What happened? Do you know what's going on?" he asked.

'Why are you asking me that? It happened in your region, you bastard.'

“I just heard the news as well. You didn’t receive any news from the Federation?” I asked.

“We’re not sure what’s going on, but around two o’clock, we lost contact with them. I-I also heard about all this from my adjutant,” he replied.

“There hasn’t been a separate briefing?” I asked.

“No. Not an official briefing, but… I believe it’ll start soon. F-For now—”

Gellahan was interrupted when the door to the meeting room was opened.

A familiar face walked into the meeting room.

“*Ah*, Mr. Ki-Young.”

“Guild Master of Blue. It’s been a while.”

Gellahan greeted him, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t give the former any attention. Kim Hyun-Sung seemed to have become a bit emotional and biased, which was unlike him.

I thought he would at least make eye contact with Gellahan, but he completely ignored the former.

‘What’s wrong with him?’

Kim Hyun-Sung had always been the type to remain calm no matter the situation, so it was a bit surprising to see him acting like this. However, it didn’t take me long to figure out what was going on.

‘He reeks of alcohol. How much did he drink?’

People with a ton of mana, like Kim Hyun-Sung, would find it incredibly difficult to get drunk. Seeing him up close, he was a mess. He would always make sure that he would have a neat look, no matter where he went, but he looked really haggard today.

However, I couldn’t help but think that it was kind of unfair to see that he still looked handsome despite his messy hair.

Kim Hyun-Sung eventually sat down.

I was sure that it wouldn't happen, but I couldn't help but get worried that he might go crazy and start swinging his sword.

'He must be having a hard time… '

I was sure that he felt like his head was about to explode. He was already having a hard time mentally, but a huge incident suddenly broke out.

There was a high chance that he was already at his wit's end because the joint training wasn't going according to his plan.

Fortunately, we managed to make him take a break in between all this mess. Otherwise, I was certain that he wouldn't have been able to remain sane all this while.

After being ignored, Gellahan's mood soured, so I patted his back to console him.

Then, I sat next to Kim Hyun-Sung as the Federation members started the briefing. I thought perhaps the destruction was caused by the upcoming threat that Benigoa had mentioned and Kim Hyun-Sung was worried about, but…

'I'm sure this isn't it… ' When I thought about the recent events, the threat couldn't be the one behind this incident. *'I don't know what he's thinking… '*

He looked worried, but… I thought I should take a rain check on finding out what Kim Hyun-Sung thought about the incident. Right now, the briefing was more important.

"First of all, I would like to apologize and thank you all for gathering here so early in the morning."

It seemed that every nation had the same opening spiel.

Anyway, the official briefing finally started.

"The first report was at 12:34 PM. The chief mage of the Federation felt a massive flow of magic around 11 PM. There was a violent tremor, and the region went off the grid. The accident happened in the large city of Amera. The denizens of the

Federation were evacuated around 11:43 PM and around 2:32 AM, everyone had already evacuated except a portion of the ordinary denizens and adventurers."

"…"

"We believe that those who had failed to evacuate are trapped in an underground shelter. We're still investigating what happened. We heard that there was a large explosion and incessant loud noises."

'That isn't enough information… '

The large city of Amera was the capital of the Federation. The tutorial dungeon of the Americans was located at Amera, and it was such an influential city that it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that it was the driving force of the Federation's economy.

Since Amera was the capital of the Federation, it had many important facilities, so it would be an understatement to say that Amera was important to the Federation.

'Even though that's the case, the way they're handling the issue is pretty slow.'

They had done a good job at evaluating the damages and evacuating the denizens, but I was shocked by the fact that the report only arrived at 12:34 PM when the incident occurred at 11 PM.

It meant that the report was delayed for an hour and thirty-four minutes.

Obviously, I got curious about what Kylie Yale and the people like Gellahan were up to. I wasn't sure what Kylie was going to do, but I was sure that Gellahan was going to do something stupid.

"The investigation team we sent to Amera still hasn't returned. It was also difficult to figure out what was going on, even using griffons or other methods. The ground is still trembling, so the nearby cities are preparing to evacuate their people…"

"However, the monsters in the nearby forests are furious, so they're having trouble moving people around."

"*Hm*."

"The chief mage of the Federation is still looking for clues, but the traces are thin,

so… we need support from high-ranking mages. This is all the information that we have received so far. We're currently trying to think of a way to receive news systematically."

'It's decent… '

The information we had on hand wasn't enough for us to come up with theories. We also couldn't completely exclude the possibility that the Federation was hiding information from us, so I had no choice but to be cautious.

They were trying to split Kim Hyun-Sung and me, so it wouldn't be strange if they had something else up their sleeves.

Yes, there was an explosion, and a city was completely ruined. However, we had no idea what was actually happening within the Federation.

This continental alliance…

It was possible that this was one of their tricks to stab the Sacred Democratic Country in the back and shatter the continental alliance.

No, it was highly likely that this was one of their cards.

'Oh, they're really cunning… Who's supporting you guys?'

I saw that Kylie Yale's hair had turned white.

'Mana exhaustion.'

She was pretending like she was fine, but she was obviously stressed.

She used advanced magic to hide her hair color, but I could clearly see her white hair through Mind's Eye. I couldn't find a connection just yet, but Kylie Yale's white hair and Amera's sudden plight were really suspicious.

'They're putting on a show.'

"We must prepare the soldiers and rescue the trapped denizens…"

"No. First of all, we must figure out what happened."

“That’s going to take too long. shouldn’t we rescue the denizens in the other cities first?”

“We must move cautiously. We still don’t know who the enemy is or what their intentions are. I’d like to hear what the others think about all this.”

“I think it’s best if we observe a bit longer…”

“Didn’t we gather here for incidents like this?”

“Let’s start off by making preparations, so we’ll be prepared for anything. I think it’s best for us to prepare so that we can leave anytime.”

“I agree.”

“I agree.”

‘They’re just trying to show off… ’

It was a funny sight. The people who weren’t part of the Federation were trying to back out, while the Federation members were crying out, saying that reinforcements should be sent over to Amera right away.

The sight was so ridiculous that the meeting was rendered meaningless.

I could understand the feelings of the scums who were relieved that the incident didn’t happen in their region. After all, it was none of their business.

However, the fact that those scums looked so sure that what had happened to the Federation wouldn’t happen to their region was suspicious.

Right now, they should have suggested that we should send reinforcements over to Amera, but they didn’t say anything like that.

Kylie Yale was here, so I thought that it wouldn’t be too bad to observe in the meantime.

There were apparently many denizens who had gotten trapped in Amera, but they weren’t really my problem. In addition, I couldn’t ignore the possibility that the Federation members were lying and that no one really got trapped.

‘I wonder if three days are enough… ’

I couldn’t help but wonder if three days were enough for us to do a background check on Kylie Yale and create an advantageous situation for us.

There were variables, but it was possible.

However, I had no choice but to remain quiet when Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora showed up with white hair.

‘What the hell did you guys do?’

Their white hair meant that they were suffering from the effects of mana exhaustion.

CHAPTER 478
FAITHFUL SERVANT (1)

The surprise on the party members' faces made it clear that the sudden summons surprised them as well. I was surprised as well, albeit for a slightly different reason.

When I saw signs of mana exhaustion in Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora, I had to think about this incident more seriously. The incident that I had considered as someone else's problem ended up being my problem.

I felt like I had just heard that my neighbor's house was on fire, but it turned out that *my* house was actually the one that was on fire.

'What the hell did they do?'

It was also ridiculous how they sat next to each other. Jung Ha-Yan looked like she was in a better condition, but Han Sora looked pale, as if she had gotten food poisoning. Of course, it was obvious that she suffering from mana exhaustion.

Their skin was peeling off as well, in addition to their white hair, and this meant that they had sacrificed their life force after exhausting their mana. In the eyes of a third party, they were *thoroughly* exhausted, and I was sure that people would tell them to rest.

Actually, they would even suggest locking the two up because they looked like they would collapse and start vomiting blood at any time.

Jung Ha-Yan didn't look well, but her mana recovery speed was unrealistically fast, so she was doing *fine*. Of course, it was all thanks to Jung Ha-Yan's Legendary attribute: the Heart of an Archmage.

'They didn't just use a single spell… '

From what I heard from the briefing just now, there was no way a single spell could cause that much destruction.

When I saw that even Han Sora was suffering from mana exhaustion, I became even more convinced that the party didn't just drop a meteor on the Federation.

'The undead?'

The worst-case scenario was that they could have summoned a demon.

If that were true, then it was highly likely that they had summoned one of the 72 Demon Lords. Otherwise, there was no way they could have laid waste to Amera. Kylie Yale probably got involved as well because her magic was in the 90s.

If she had decided to join Jung Ha-Yan's party, then she had to have received a lot of benefits to do so. I wasn't sure if they had summoned Belial, but they were definitely trying to wipe the Federation off the map.

'Why are you doing this?'

Many things were bothering me, and I got even more suspicious of Jung Ha-Yan when I remembered how I once muttered that the world was too peaceful next to her.

Recently, I also kept on spending time with Jamila while giving Jung Ha-Yan the excuse that I was going out to eat and meet people. Of course, I didn't make unnecessary physical contact with Jamila, but what I had done could be considered one of the textbook actions of a scum.

Naturally, there was a reason behind my recent actions, but it was still undeniable that I was a shitty guy who left his fiancee to go out and meet other people

'Wait, what if she heard my conversation with Hyun-Sung yesterday?'

I started getting suspicious that Jung Ha-Yan heard the conversation between Kim Hyun-Sung and me yesterday. I wasn't sure how, but she could have heard me saying that I was going to move over to the Federation, which made her lose her mind.

I wasn't sure about many things, like how she managed to team up with Kylie Yale and why she immediately exploded without any forewarning, but I decided to continue looking for more puzzle pieces and complete the puzzle later on.

'I knew she seemed a bit suspicious. Shit…!'

My stomach had sunk when I realized that a strange spell was cast on Kylie Yale. I knew that the caster was nearby, but I couldn't have expected that the caster would end up being Jung Ha-Yan.

Of course, it was still unconfirmed that she was the one who had cast a spell on Kylie Yale, but based on Jung Ha-Yan's track record, it would be safe to presume that she was the caster.

It was also more convincing than saying that Kim Hyun-Sung destroyed the entire Federation out of frustration and fury.

'I need to really teach her a lesson this time… '

Of course, I wasn't really sure if that was even possible…

I had to talk to her before she caused even bigger problems.

Everything was fine right now, but if Jung Ha-Yan also became an issue in addition to the upcoming threat to the continent, then I honestly wasn't confident that I would be able to handle both of them at the same time.

Anyway, it was imperative for me to figure out what happened, and I also had to do my best to hide that three of our guild members were possible suspects.

'It's better this way. Shit… It's better this way.'

I decided to look at the ongoing situation from a positive angle, and it didn't seem that bad. It seemed like we were in the worst-case scenario, but the incident actually changed what everyone felt about the joint training.

'I was actually thinking about abandoning those Federation bastards after all this.'

The leaders of the continent thought that nothing would happen, but something actually happened, which made them feel a sense of crisis.

I was actually thinking about causing trouble, so Jung Ha-Yan actually ended up helping me by taking care of my plan. The problem was that I wasn't involved in the planning stage.

I wasn't sure how well they took care of the evidence, and it was also difficult to

imagine those three taking care of the incident perfectly without leaving a single clue or trace. It was even more applicable because Jung Ha-Yan was their leader.

They decided to involve Kylie Yale of the Federation, so I couldn't help but hope that they took care of the incident thoroughly.

Unfortunately, a single piece of evidence would be enough for the people to track them, so I started to feel desperate.

It would be strange if I weren't feeling desperate when there was a chance that everything would come to light.

After all, the truth was that Jung Ha-Yan had cast the spell that almost wiped Laios off of the map, Han Sora was a black mage, and the Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country had covered everything up.

I had to figure out how they created this incident, and I had to be one step ahead by making sure that they didn't leave any evidence behind.

In the worst-case scenario, I could draw a beautiful picture by blaming Kylie Yale for everything, but it couldn't be done unless I knew every detail about the incident.

'I need to figure out if there's evidence, and I have to handle everything… by myself.'

Kim Hyun-Sung adjourned the briefing despite the chaos. While Jo Hye-Jin was talking to the party members, I couldn't help but talk to Kim Hyun-Sung.

"Mr. Hyun-Sung."

"Yes, Mr. Ki-Young."

"…Can I ask what the Blue Guild is planning to do about all this?" I asked.

"I honestly haven't made a decision. We should send reinforcements right away, considering that people are trapped there, but the leaders decided to send a scout team first. We also don't have enough information for us to just go there, and we also shouldn't take unnecessary risks," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

"I see," I commented.

“This will sound a bit cruel, but I honestly agree with the leaders’ opinion. The Federation is in a bad situation, but there’s no need for us to take risks. I’m planning on observing until we receive useful information. Without useful information, we can’t create a plan to tackle the issue,” he continued.

It was a reasonable decision.

“Right now, the only thing we can do is wait until they’ve collected enough information and help evacuate the denizens of the other cities. I’m sure they’ll reach the same decision as us as well,” he added.

If I were in Kim Hyun-Sung’s shoes, I would have thought the same. The top priority was to gather enough information because we still had no idea what exactly happened in the Federation.

We could probably help the denizens outside the city, but going to the epicenter of the disaster was too much. It was a reasonable decision no matter how much I thought about it, but…

‘I hope he’s not saying that just because he doesn’t want to go.’

It was nothing more than an assumption, but I couldn’t help but think that he was hoping that the Federation would fall just like this.

The Federation was a hostile force that was trying to destroy the Blue Guild, and Kim Hyun-Sung was probably thinking that he was about to win without much effort.

Our political opponent was about to collapse on their own, and their collapse would definitely stop me from moving over to the Federation.

‘Was he involved in this as well?’

He had a reasonable motive. However, I couldn’t do anything else but sigh, even though he was suspicious. And it was all because I had already figured out what he thought about the ongoing situation. In addition, he had decided to become passive as well.

It happened like a bolt out of the blue, so it was a good enough reason to stand by and watch. Of course, I was worried that he would just watch until the Federation collapsed, but it was a hundred—no, a thousand times better than charging in as

heroes and suffering catastrophically as a result.

'It's not that bad for me, too… '

I still didn't want people to know that Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora could be the culprits.

"Forming a refugee support group should be one of the top priorities," I said.

"I believe we have already received requests for support from the guilds and clans of the Federation. The Blue Guild will remain on standby for now. What about…" Kim Hyun-Sung trailed off.

"I'll go and take a look around. Something has been bothering me," I replied.

"*Ah*, let's go together, then," he suggested.

"No, there's no need. I'm really just going to look around. I'll be with Ha-Yan, so you don't have to worry so much," I declined.

"…"

'Please don't say that you're going to follow me… '

I felt like I had to beat him to the punch…

"The guild needs a leader on the field, so you don't have to come with me. It won't take long as well," I added.

"But…"

"There are many things we need to handle, and I believe you know them better than I do, Mr. Hyun-Sung… It's better for you to stay here since I haven't really been training these days. You don't have to worry. I'll be *really* quick," I assured him.

"Well, since you said it like that… All right," he said.

I wasn't sure why, but he seemed disappointed. There was a chance that he thought that I was really going to leave the Blue Guild because I had just declined his offer. Well, what he thought didn't really matter right now.

I pushed away the trivial thoughts and glanced at Jung Ha-Yan. The culprit behind this huge incident and the hero who had completely resolved the continental alliance's laziness issue seemed happy that I was staring at her.

She flinched slightly, but she quickly smiled brightly at me. Jung Ha-Yan looked like she could never imagine that I would be suspicious of her. She also looked happy that we were about to take a stroll.

'Yeah… the medicine's wearing off as well.'

I was actually thankful that she managed to endure it for so long.

"Let's go, Ha-Yan," I said.

"O-Okay!"

"We're just going to ride the griffon and take a look around real quick. I'm going to record everything, so we can watch it on the magic hologram in the future. You're okay with that, right?" I asked.

"O-Of course, oppa. *Hehe*," Jung Ha-Yan replied.

"We'll be back, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I told him.

"Okay."

Would it be better to be straightforward and pressure her, or should I take a slightly different route and help her realize her mistake?

I thought about it, but I couldn't find the right answer.

Of course, there was a way—a surefire way to resolve the issue with Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Hyun-Sung. It would be kind of difficult, but it shouldn't be too much trouble as long as the conditions were met.

The two conditions that had to be met were the following: Han Sora and Jung Ha-Yan had to have summoned a demon to cause havoc in the Federation, and the demon had to be Belial, the Demon of Lies and Instigation.

CHAPTER 479
FAITHFUL SERVANT (2)

"Wouldn't it be better if I went along as well?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"It's fine. We're not going that far, anyway. I just want to see what's going on, and like I said, I think there's something strange," I replied.

"*Ugh*, I don't really understand, but… have a safe trip," he said.

"Have a safe trip, Father Lee Ki-Young. May Elune's protection be upon you…" Elena said.

"You don't have to worry, Miss Elena," I told her.

I had to spend a lot of time saying goodbye to Sun Hee-Young, Park Deok-Gu, Elena, and the other party members.

"It's nothing serious. There's just something that's a bit strange, so I'm going to find out what it is and come right back."

I told them that, but the lack of information still made them feel worried. Of course, it would've been nice if they could go with me, but I had to go with only Jung Ha-Yan in tow for the sake of the upcoming event.

Honestly, there was no guarantee that Belial was the one who had been summoned.

I wasn't even sure if Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora had actually summoned a demon, and even if they had managed to summon a demon, the chance that the demon was Belial was low, but…

'It's strangely familiar… '

The mana in the northwestern region felt strangely familiar to me, so I thought that was probably the case. I had signed a contract with Belial once, and I had also never been wrong about things like this.

My ears kept on ringing as well, and it felt like Belial was trying to communicate with me, but he couldn't connect with me because something was interfering. I had a hunch that the bankrupt Benigoa and the ruthless scum Elune were the culprits.

It had been a while since I had seen Whitefall. I patted its back and got on. Jung Ha-Yan also got on the griffon, and she wrapped her arms around my waist.

'Shit. I can't breathe. Are you trying to perform the Heimlich maneuver on me?'

I coughed, but she didn't let go. She looked as if she had no plans of letting me go, so I couldn't help but think that she had become even more obsessed with me.

Of course, she had long gotten used to staying with me, but she had always been the type to lose control over her strength in situations like this.

Her bright expression was completely different from the expressions of the people around us, and the difference was so stark that I couldn't help but feel conscious of their gazes.

Of course, I could understand Jung Ha-Yan's feelings. After all, the Federation was still collapsing as we speak, and under the assumption that she had heard my conversation with Kim Hyun-Sung…

'It's even more understandable.'

I organized my thoughts, and it started to make sense considering how Kylie Yale of the Federation had been spending time with Kim Hyun-Sung, but this way of thinking was too one-dimensional.

The first step was to talk about my recent behavior with Kim Hyun-Sung or with Jung Ha-Yan.

I was sure that Kylie Yale had said something about how I had been doing stuff with other women, and Jung Ha-Yan probably reacted to that.

'It's safe to assume that Kylie Yale got involved from there… '

I was sure that the training I had been giving Jung Ha-Yan had helped her endure for a while. The Federation bastards had managed to continue with their plans for quite a while, so I wanted to compliment her for her patience.

While she was trying her best to contain her anger by crying every night by herself, she had definitely heard my conversation with Kim Hyun-Sung, and she had come to the conclusion that I was about to abandon her for the Federation.

She had then proceeded to destroy the Federation with Han Sora on her right and Kylie Yale on her left. I was sure that this was what had happened, but there were still many parts that bothered me.

What bothered me the most was the distance between the joint training base and the Federation. The distance between the two was great, but it was possible to travel there and come back within twenty-eight hours. However, the timing would be really tight.

In addition, they would have needed more time because they still had to draw magic circles and cast various complicated spells before they could perform the summoning ritual.

'Damn it… I hope Park Deok-Gu didn't say anything.'

Park Deok-Gu had done a lot of trolling before, so I couldn't exclude the possibility that he had said something that exacerbated the issue.

The assumption that he had said something about how I had fallen for another woman or how a gold digger had managed to seduce me to come over to the Federation made sense, this hypothesis actually fit the situation.

I couldn't help but think that he had been egging Jung Ha-Yan on to proceed with her plan of destroying the Federation and killing that nonexistent gold digger.

'It makes sense no matter how much I think about it… '

I had spent a lot of time with Jung Ha-Yan, to the extent that I could already read her body language. Of course, I had long gotten used to her general behavior patterns as well.

As a result, my assumptions made me feel a shiver down my spine. Jung Ha-Yan's train of thought had always been unique. An ordinary person wouldn't destroy the Federation just because they had heard a rumor about how I might move over to the Federation.

An ordinary person would try their best to convince me to stay, but they wouldn't go ahead and wipe the Federation off of the map.

They were all assumptions, but I became even more confident of them when I heard Jung Ha-Yan's following words.

"H-H-Have you heard the news?"

"What news?" I asked.

"T-The beach that you can see from A-A-A-Amera… has been c-c-completely destroyed. The sea view is ruined, and p-p-people won't be able to play in the w-water anymore," she replied.

'Where did you hear that news? I haven't even heard of that yet…

I could remember telling Kim Hyun-Sung about the beauty of Amera's sea view.

"I-It's known as a beautiful place… so I really wanted to go with y-you t-there, but there are many b-beaches in the Democratic Country as well. There's also Laios, which is closer to us. T-There's no need to go all the way to the F-Federation… right?" she asked.

"Yeah…" I replied.

"A-And according to the rumors, the people there aren't that great. The adventurers are… b-bad people, and the w-women are bad as well. T-They say that they're good to s-scam outsiders," she continued.

"I see…" I commented.

"So I heard that we should n-never trust the people from the Federation. People said they're all bad people," she added.

"Who said that?" I asked.

"*Huh? Uh?* I-I heard it somewhere," Jung Ha-Yan answered.

I hope that she hadn't heard it from Park Deok-Gu because I was scared to even imagine what he might have told her.

Anyway, Jung Ha-Yan continued mumbling behind me, and the way she continued badmouthing the Federation made me feel unsettled.

She even had a go at their cuisine, saying that their food wasn't good.

It was clear that she had become desperate, considering how she managed to slander them for hours on end. She was desperately trying to depict the Federation in a bad light in case of an emergency.

'She had it all planned out.'

I was curious about the next part of her plan. I was sure that the end of her plan was to let the Federation completely sink into the ground. She could be planning on turning Amera into ruins so that it would appear as if it had never existed.

If my assumption that they managed to summon one of the 72 Demon Lords in Amera ended up being the truth, then the entire region under the control of the Federation would get wiped off of the map in just seven to ten days.

If the contract was better than the previous one, then the Federation's demise would come even sooner.

"W-We can't even go to the Federation now, even if we wanted to go there, right?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"You're right," I answered.

I actually wanted to threaten her by telling her I wouldn't want to see her ever again, but I had already learned the hard way that threats wouldn't last that long against her.

In addition, I was somewhat thankful for the incident.

'She still has to be punished… '

She had to realize that the consequences could be catastrophic if something went wrong after creating an incident on this scale without my permission. Jung Ha-Yan had to be aware of the consequences of doing that, which could be as catastrophic as the consequences she had to face in her first life.

Obviously, the most effective way to convince her to start talking was to be kind to her. I made sure to infuse my voice with gentleness and kindness, and her voice gradually went up until it became clear that she was having a lot of fun.

It had been several hours since we had started riding the griffon and staring at the sky. I spent time chatting away with Jung Ha-Yan for a few hours before I finally realized that we were almost at our destination.

I used as much mana as I could to activate Mind's Eye, and I instantly understood why the Federation couldn't gather useful information.

'I can't see anything.'

The surroundings had suddenly gone dark. I couldn't see Amera's current status at all, and the darkness remained even after using Mind's Eye. The sky had been pretty bright just before we approached Amera, but now, I couldn't see the sun at all.

I started wondering if all this was caused by black magic rather than by a demon.

It was ridiculous, but Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed at the sight, "I-I-It's so bad! I-It's going to be r-really hard for them to… r-recover. What should we do?"

'Why are you saying that with a smile, and how can you say that it's going to be hard for Amera to recover when we can't even see anything?'

"I-I'm not sure w-where they should even start. Should I record all these using the magic hologram?" she asked.

"Yeah, let's do that," I answered.

"Still… I-I'd like to take a look around… I-I can see a light over there. It's small, but…" she pointed.

I could see a few denizens trying their best to escape the city amidst the darkness. I managed to see them because of the lights that the priests were using to lead the way.

I circulated my holy power without saying anything, and I could finally somewhat see the city's overall condition. My griffon also seemed like it felt a bit more at ease thanks to my holy power.

I could see soldiers of the Federation fighting the enraged monsters that had emerged from the nearby forests. The continental alliance still hadn't put together a reinforcement team for them, and the soldiers were outnumbered as well.

The few members of the continental alliance's scout team had clearly been unable to just stand by and watch because I could see them working with the soldiers to fend off the monsters.

However, they were still struggling overall.

'It's a mess—a hot mess.'

I descended toward where the denizens were being evacuated and scattered my holy power all over the place, illuminating the surroundings. It seemed that they had realized that the honorary cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country was here, because I could hear them shouting my name, but I wasn't interested in rescuing them.

I was only here because I wanted to confirm whether my assumptions were true or not.

The constant ringing in my head was definitely a signal from the wise Belial.

"O-Oppa. I think i-it'll be dangerous if we stay here…" Jung Ha-Yan commented.

"We need to save the people," I told her.

"B-But still—you told the others that you'll just check real quick and come back. L-Let's go back," she suggested.

"I can't just turn a blind eye to them. Let's look around a bit more," I said.

"B-But…"

I was an expert at turning a blind eye, but it was important for me to stay here.

Jung Ha-Yan had definitely recovered a portion of her strength; I could finally see strands of black hair amidst her white hair. Still, she was also definitely anxious because she still hadn't recovered from the effects of mana exhaustion.

The monsters here were Average, Rare, and Epic. Epic-ranked monsters were the strongest monsters here, so there was no reason for Jung Ha-Yan to feel anxious.

There were also no strong undulations of mana from anywhere in the city, and I couldn't feel any black magic as well.

In other words, the fact that she was behaving that way meant that…

'It means that I'm right… '

She had summoned a demon, and it was a demon that a contractor could control. I didn't even have to be suspicious of the demon's identity because the ringing got even stronger the more steps I took.

Of course, I really wasn't sure just yet, but the familiar energy definitely belonged to the one I respected the most.

The perfectly clear voice that rang in my head confirmed my assumptions.

[It's been a while, disgusting human! *Hahaha*. I see that your soul is still as disgusting as ever!]

The Demon of Lies and Instigation, Belial, had been summoned to the real world once more.

'This faithful servant greets the lord of all evil! Long live Belial! Hurray! Hurray! Hurray!'

CHAPTER 480
YOU SHOULD BE PUNISHED (1)

Belial's voice managed to penetrate the cold-hearted Elune scum, and the incompetent Benigoa's interference, and his voice made my body and soul feel at home. I was honestly a bit doubtful that Belial got summoned.

I had heard about how Jung Ha-Yan, Kylie Yale, and Han Sora received help from mysterious helpers, but I thought their chance of summoning Belial was low. My presumption was evidenced by how my mana influenced Belial's previous summoning.

I assumed that Jung Ha-Yah had done something to create a similar environment as Laios back then. There was a chance that she borrowed my mana or brought a compatible catalyst with her.

Of course, I wasn't really sure what she had done, and it was more important to deal with the fact that the great Lord Belial had descended once again.

I couldn't see Belial's grim face, but I was sure that he knew where I was right now. In other words, the surrounding darkness was under the control of the supreme Belial.

'He sure is amazing.'

This wasn't my first time being subjected to the aura of a mythic-ranked being, but the sensation still amazed me. I gulped unknowingly upon recalling how half of the Federation was currently surrounded by darkness.

Belial hadn't actually completely descended on this world, so it was even more awe-inspiring.

Benigoa's descent and how she had personally annihilated the undead creatures during the war with the Republic was worthy of applause, but…

'Your power is beyond the understanding of this foolish mortal. I am once again in awe

of your power, Ruler of All Evil.'

[I already told you that you don't have to flatter me. It's really been a while… *Really.*]

'I've missed you so much, Belial.'

[I've missed you as well, disgusting human. We don't really miss someone else, but your disgusting soul made me recall a feeling that I had long forgotten. I'm not sure if I should give you an example…]

'It is my great honor to be missed by the gracious Belial.'

[About that flattery…]

'Where are you, Belial? This dark energy covering the entire region made me realize my incompetence and inferior pedigree, and it also made me realize how noble and pure you are. I am heartbroken that I can't see your great figure.'

[Your flattery…]

'Your voice that is as deep as the abyss…! It has never failed to make this mortal's heart pound. Your voice makes me melt!'

[…I've always thought this about you, but you really are a disgusting human. I actually can't feel even an ounce of dishonesty in your voice, and it makes me feel like vomiting. You can stop your flattery because those words are unnecessary between us. Anyway, there must be something you need.]

'That isn't the case. Of course, that doesn't mean I don't need anything at all, but… I'm heartbroken because I feel like you still haven't realized my sincerity.'

[Even in Hell, I've never heard of flattery that is as disgusting as yours. I know that you're thinking about how to squeeze as much value as you can from me.]

'It's a misunderstanding, Belial. How could I do—'

[Forget it. It will be a win-win situation, anyway… I should actually thank you for the previous incident.]

'You mean how I helped you?'

[No need to discuss the details.]

That was what he said, but I had an inkling about the underlying meaning behind his words. I was sure that the combined fear and anxiety from the people of the continent due to the previous incident had helped him tremendously.

Demon Lords were similar to the gods, whose sustenance was the faith of their followers.

Moreover, it happened during the contract period, so it had to have been counted as one of his accomplishments, which meant that his rank had increased along with his power.

I was sure that the supreme ruler of thousands of demons, Belial, was wielding even greater power compared to last time because of the summoners' hard work and meticulous preparation, but I also felt like he had become even more powerful himself.

[That's right. You're quick on the uptake, human. Then, you should know what I desire.]

'I believe it's regarding the contract and the additional benefits you'll receive through it. It just so happens that you and I want the same thing. I'm so happy that we both have the same interests this time as well. Anyway, regarding the contract… '

[There isn't a contract this time. The black mage human is pretty talented, but it's difficult to establish a contract without you. I had an idea about what she wanted, so I just nodded. Without a proper contract, my time here will be short, but… do not be disappointed.]

'Is it bad for you to remain in the real world for a long time?'

[I won't say that it's bad. I enjoy staying here, but the real world is like my workplace, so I'm not fond of staying here for a long time. Anyway, this useless conversation shall end here. Tell me what you want.]

'Ahem… ahem… I apologize for telling you this myself, but… you told me to tell you what I want with your gracious voice, so I'll bear the shame and tell you.'

[I hope it's something fun.]

'It's honestly the same as last time.'

[*Hm?*]

'To be clear, you have to fool the entire continent rather than just one person. I'm a bit cautious about asking you if you're satisfied with that arrangement, but I believe that you'll enjoy it just as much as last time, at the very least.'

[Is that so?]

'I still don't have enough information, so I can't tell you everything… '

[I'm curious about what kind of scummy thoughts you're having this time. I'm *really* curious.]

'I'm sure it'll be more than enough to achieve the result that you want to achieve. Will you get into a contract with the black mage like you did last time?'

[I don't need it. A direct contract is impossible, but a temporary contract is possible. It looks like the stupid Benigoa and the other gods aren't managing the continent properly. If those hard-liners were passionate about doing something to the continent, then I'm sure that humanity would have been in a *really* awkward position.]

'When you say hard-liners… '

[I'm sure you have already heard from Benigoa, but this continent is like a workplace for beings like us.]

'A workplace… ''

[I just used an expression that humans will understand, so I can provide you with a proper example. None of us will actually say that this continent is a *workplace*, but it is indeed a place for us to do business. They obtain holy power through faith and by managing the continent, while we obtain power through emotions and contracts. In other words, this is like a market. The hard-liners I was talking about were the demons whose long-cherished wish is to guide this *workplace* down the path of destruction.]

'I-I see… '

[Their long-cherished wish is dumb. To put it bluntly, this continent is a hen that lays golden eggs, and the hard-liners are trying to cut open the stomach of that hen…]

'T-They're ignorant… '

I was being kind of disrespectful here, but I knew that demons weren't like humans at all, so I was confident that Belial wouldn't take offense.

Anyway, their problem was a lot more serious than ours, but it was possible that I was only thinking that way because Belial had used examples that were easier for me to understand, like saying that the continent was a *workplace* and how the hard-liners were trying to kill the hen that laid golden eggs.

Of course, their issue was fundamentally the same as ours.

'I'm sure they're stressed as well.'

Their business partner was basically kicking up a fuss at their workplace. I wasn't sure what the hard-liners and the moderates among the demons wanted to do, but the answer was easy to deduce.

There was a chance that there were demons who cared about mankind, but Belial and the moderates probably only wanted to maintain the status quo for the sake of ranking up by raking achievements.

Therefore, they obviously wanted to keep the continent safe. After all, this was the shared workplace of both demons and the gods.

'In other words, many demons do not want to see the destruction of the continent.'

Of course, it was probably different for the hard-liners.

I heard a voice interrupting my train of thought. However, the voice didn't belong to Belial. It belonged to the anxious Jung Ha-Yan. I was sure she was anxious because she was carefully looking around.

At the sight, I couldn't help but think that my presumption was correct. She was definitely nervous about staying here because she couldn't control Belial after summoning him.

“L-Let’s go back, oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan suggested.

‘Why would I go back? If you want to go back, go back by yourself, Ha-Yan.’

“I-I have a bad feeling… H-Hurry…” she added.

Jung Ha-Yan nervously pulled at the hem of my clothes. I glanced at her and saw her biting her lips. It wasn’t really strange that she was nervous because Jung Ha-Yan definitely knew more than anyone else that this place was dangerous.

I wanted to take a closer look before leaving, but my *lover* didn’t want me to go. She had no idea what was going on, so she was frustrated about how I kept on walking deeper into the darkness.

I glanced at Jung Ha-Yan again and saw her eyes darting around.

‘So you’re not going to confess… ’

“T-The others will get worried if we come back late, s-so let’s go back. T-The reinforcements should be here s-soon,” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“But, still…”

“I-I said let’s hurry!” she urged.

‘How dare she give me orders… ’

“Wait…” I said.

“We have to leave!” she yelled.

‘Unni, you don’t like me, right?’

[I already told you that I like you.]

‘I-I wasn’t saying that to you, Belial.’

[I know. I was just joking, so there’s no need to be nervous about it. Now, let’s talk about something more useful…]

'I agree, Belial.'

[I have an idea what you want, but is it really okay for us to do that? I don't really care, but the power of that dumb Benigoa will weaken.]

'You don't have to worry about the workplace of the great beings. I can't give you a definite answer, but if we get lucky, the continent will go back to its original state. After all, desperate humans often turn to their gods. All you have to do is show these ignorant humans your great power. If you use Benigoa's second coming and me—the symbol of Benigoa—things will… probably be easier for you… '

[Are you staying that…]

'This is the first request of your incompetent servant. Oh, ruler of all demons, please abduct me.'

[*Pffft… Pffft…* You really are a disgusting human. Are you not suspicious of me at all? I can harm you if I want…]

'We already have something going on between us… '

[Right! That's right! Your request is granted because it's between you and me. *Pffft*…! *Hehe*… All right. I'll play along.]

'I'm extremely grateful. Thank you. Thank you very much! Three cheers for Belial…!'

[Let's get started.]

I immediately found myself suffocating.

'What the heck? Shit…!'

Jung Ha-Yan was obviously more shocked than me.

Her face had turned pallid, and she was covered in sweat.

"R-R-Run…" Jung Ha-Yan muttered.

'What?"

“H-Hurry!” she urged.

“What… are you…”

“I-I said run! Hurry! Hurry up and run!” she screamed.

The situation quickly became tense. What was about to happen would be a bit brutal, but Jung Ha-Yan definitely had to go through it.

CHAPTER 481
YOU SHOULD BE PUNISHED (2)

'Run? I'm about to walk in there myself.'

I was smiling, but Jung Ha-Yan was frowning because she had just realized that the current situation was more dangerous than any situation we had been in before. I could feel it on my skin, so I couldn't even begin to imagine just how anxious she was feeling.

Despite the shenanigans, my well-being was still the most important for her. I was thankful for that, but this was a justifiable trap.

'Don't go soft, Ki-Young… '

I was determined to be tough on Jung Ha-Yan.

I wasn't expecting Jung Ha-Yan to change drastically, but I couldn't keep on fixing every incident that she would cause. I was willing to overlook small incidents, but this incident was definitely not *small*. In the end, I would benefit from what she had done, but the issue was that she hadn't asked me for permission.

I couldn't help but think that I had to talk to her again before she caused more problems.

I wasn't sure if she was aware of this, but Jung Ha-Yan continued looking around anxiously.

"I-It's too late," Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

"What do you…"

"D-Don't fall. You can't fall no matter what. No matter what…!" she added.

"What are you talking about?" I asked.

“I-I’ll explain l-later, so don’t fall. Please don’t fall,” she replied.

Jung Ha-Yan’s eyes were filled with unprecedented anxiety.

All of a sudden, hideous-looking demons emerged from the darkness.

At the sight, Jung Ha-Yan realized that any explanation was useless because she started channeling her spells.

I abruptly froze from the pressure that instantly surrounded me. I turned my eyes and saw a figure walking out from among the hideous-looking demons. The high-ranked, hideous-looking demons walked to the side as if Moses were here to part the Red Sea.

I assumed that Belial himself would appear, but the approaching figure was a beautiful woman. The word beautiful would be an understatement to describe her because my jaw dropped to the floor when I clapped my eyes at her.

Her overall look was different from ordinary women, which could be a bit of a problem for some people, but she was beautiful overall.

- *Hm*…

She looked around slowly and started petting a large hellhound. She wasn’t really doing anything else, but her presence was enough to make me feel pressured. Her pallid visage and purple eyes were scary, but her clothes which were made out of wriggling tentacles rather than fabric, were scarier.

Her hair was also made out of squirming snakes.

She had an extremely beautiful face, but the grotesque tentacles all over her disgusted me.

‘Ew, gross.’

Obviously, the hostility she was sending toward me made me feel more nauseous than her appearance.

‘Shit… You’re with Belial, right?’

[Checking the status window of the Semi-Mythic Rank Named Monster, Rimoura.]

[Name - Rimoura]

[Title - High Priest of the 27th Legion, Rank 1,692 Demon Lord, Belial's Loyal Priest]

[Age - 666]

[Nature - Loyal Egoist]

[Stats]

[Only limited information is available, so her stats cannot be displayed. She is currently suffering from a penalty after being summoned to the real world, so her stats have decreased slightly.]

Detailed information wasn't available, but I felt like I didn't really need to check. The fact that she was a Semi-Mythic Named Monster was enough—enough for me to realize the depths of her power.

- Nice to meet you. I'm Rimoura, the high priest of the 27th Legion.

"…"

- I thought… I thought I was just imagining things when I smelled a foul and nauseating light somewhere… It seems that today is my lucky day. I didn't expect that I'll stumble upon Benigoa's Second Coming. I have just descended, so this is a pleasant surprise.

She abruptly stared at me, which caught me off guard. However, I started nodding when I saw the friendliness hidden in the depths of her gaze.

'Wow… she's a great actress.'

As expected from a demon under Belial. She looked like she was enjoying all this as well, but I was surprised by the fact that a demon as powerful as her was actually

summoned to the real world.

Naturally, I didn't think that…

'…Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora summoned her. I don't think they summoned here.'

Belial was most likely her summoner. It was difficult to summon demons into the real world, and I was certain that it was more difficult to summon a demon at her level.

However, Belial managed to summon her, which meant that Belial had basically gone against the system.

'Perhaps there's a rift in the system, and they're exploiting that?'

They were probably exploiting a hole in the system.

'It could have been a more serious issue… '

I was relieved that Belial was the manager of the rift because if it had been a hard-liner… Actually, there was no need to make that kind of assumption because there wasn't a human who was on the same level as the great Demon Lords.

While I was having many different thoughts, Jung Ha-Yan was staring at Rimoura. She was staring at Rimoura in a daze, so I couldn't help but think that the two of them were talking telepathically, like what Belial and I had been doing all this time.

Jung Ha-Yan had caused all this, so perhaps there was an ongoing negotiation.

She hadn't successfully established a contract with Belial, but she could still be considered his summoner.

'Our Ha-Yan really grew a lot stronger than before… '

I wanted to compliment her for not casting her channeled spells upon seeing Rimoura, but their negotiations naturally didn't go as planned. Rimoura's goal was to kidnap me, so their conversation was meaningless.

I was sure that Rimoura was just playing along, and my presumption was correct because Jung Ha-Yan frowned. Her breathing was starting to get rough, and her eyes

turned bloodshot as well.

I wasn't really sure what they were talking about, but Jung Ha-Yan looked like she was losing her temper.

- Normally, I would agree, but right now, I want that man. Sorry, little mage. There's no room for negotiation.

"Ha-Yan? Are you…"

As expected, the negotiation didn't work out. Rimoura replied to Jung Ha-Yan out loud, which prompted me to look at Jung Ha-Yan as if I was asking for an explanation.

Jung Ha-Yan looked nervous. Her eyes frantically darted around to look for an excuse, but she didn't have the luxury to think about something like that because Rimoura abruptly vanished and grabbed my shoulder as well as Jung Ha-Yan's shoulder.

"*Ah…"*

'She's fast.'

Goosebumps broke out all over me. The surprised Jung Ha-Yan started casting her channeled spells, but she flew toward a distant corner with a loud boom.

I couldn't tell if she got injured, but the noise was so loud that I thought she broke a bone or two.

"Go easy on her," I requested.

- I won't kill her. I'm planning on sending her away safely. If the woman dies, the method to summon us here will disappear along with her, so why would I do something stupid like that? Belial requested the same thing, so don't worry too much about it.

"Thank you, beautiful Rimoura," I said.

- You're a sweet talker, just like I've heard. I should be the one thanking you. It has been a while since I descended into the real world, and… it's really hard to find a human that is as disgusting as you nowadays.

“Thank… you… for the compliment,” I said hesitantly.

After our small talk, I looked in Jung Ha-Yan’s direction and saw her standing up while repeatedly coughing. She saw Rimoura holding my shoulder, and I saw flames erupting in her eyes.

- Go away, you stupid human. I’m indebted to you, so I won’t take your life. And I would like to thank you as well. It has been a while since I discovered such a delicious human…

‘Ah… So that’s what they were talking about.’

I finally understood why flames erupted in Jung Ha-Yan’s eyes.

“R-Remove your hand. *Cough…!*” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

- Didn’t I tell you? I’m excited… Personally, I enjoy corrupting humans like him… You should just think that you got unlucky this time.

“R-Remove your hand…” she repeated.

- I told you to go away if you don’t want to die. This is the least that I can do for you.

“I told you… r-remove your hand,” she said once again.

- And I told you that I don’t want to.

‘Stop provoking her… ’

Of course, I wanted the situation to become more dramatic, but I couldn’t help but feel nervous. In addition, Rimoura’s tentacles started wrapping around me, and I could see that she was really enjoying this.

Her mysterious tentacles even started moving beneath my clothes.

‘S-Shit, what’s going on? Don’t do this. What’s wrong with you?’

- You’re cuter than I thought.

‘Hey… don’t do this. Ah… ahhh…!’

I unknowingly squirmed, but I knew that what I was feeling couldn't be compared to what Jung Ha-Yan was feeling right now. I honestly couldn't even begin to imagine what it would feel like to witness your man being humiliated right in front of your eyes.

'29 years old… m-my hobby is… '

This was definitely an unprecedented situation for her.

"H-Ha-Yan. Run… run away," I stuttered.

"Remove. Your. Hand," Jung Ha-Yan said.

- I don't want to…

"R-Remove your… hand… q-quickly before… I k-k-kill you… *Heuk*…! Let him go… Let him go!" she yelled. Jung Ha-Yan was very aggrieved because she started crying.

At the sight, I felt anxious about what would happen afterward.

"Please… stop provoking her, Miss Rimoura," I requested.

- Didn't you want to fix that habit of hers?

"Still, please send her away," I told her.

'I feel uncomfortable.'

- *Hm*, I thought you'd be happy. It looks like you want to get out of this situation quickly.

"I'm happy, but I'm honestly feeling nervous as well," I replied.

'This is dangerous.'

I wasn't talking about Rimoura. I was talking about the unstable Jung Ha-Yan. She kept on talking to herself, and the way she was mumbling amplified my anxiety. I could see that she was beyond angry at this point.

This wasn't the first time that this had happened because her fury had been the

reason behind the incident in Laios and in the Cursed Shrine. However, I felt that she would show me something different this time—something that she had never shown before.

'Damn it… '

My gut feeling had never been wrong. There were times when Jung Ha-Yan managed to suppress her anger and behave herself.

Unfortunately, this wasn't one of those times. Jung Ha-Yan was mumbling something while biting her nails, but she suddenly shook her messy hair and spoke in a way that terrified me. "I-I'm going to… I-I'm going to kill you…!"

- This is fun.

"Remove… that hand… you… you dirty and low life… b-bitch…! Remove your hand!!! Don't touch my oppa with those dirty hands. I-I'm going to kill you!!! Kill you!!! *Cough!* I'm going to kill you!!! I'll rip you apart! *Cough! Cough!!* I'm going to kill you!!!" Jung Ha-Yan screamed.

-…

"…"

"I'll kill youuuuuu!" she yelled.

I couldn't tell who was the demon between the two.

CHAPTER 482
YOU SHOULD BE PUNISHED (3)

I couldn't really check if she had gotten into a contract with a beast, and the energy that burst out of her body wasn't a type of magic I had seen before.

I deduced that Jung Ha-Yan had mustered a tremendous amount of mana because the strange tentacles around me tightened. I couldn't help but think that Rimoura, the High Priest of the 27th Legion and was within the top 2000s among demons was nervous.

I glanced at her and saw that she was smiling brightly.

'You can stop her, right?'

I wasn't sure why she was smiling, but she seemed to be enjoying this. Of course, I wasn't enjoying this at all. I started to feel uneasy at the impending battle between monsters.

Their clumps of mana started moving as if each clump had a will of its own.

'Shit… I hope Jung Ha-Yan isn't trying to kill me as well.'

I couldn't help but feel that way. I also started doubting if Jung Ha-Yan was still in her right mind. The way she kept mumbling with her messy hair reminded me of Juliena. I was sure of it; Jung Ha-Yan was ready to cause some serious trouble.

"Dieeeeee!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

The floating clumps of mana immediately scattered.

Crack! Crackle! Booooooom!

A few clumps of mana flew toward the other demons in the area while the remaining clumps flew toward her.

When the clumps of mana exploded, the tentacles around me loosened up. I was sure that Rimoura found it hard to fight Jung Ha-Yan without going all out while making sure I was safe.

I was sure that Jung Ha-Yan's magic made her feel threatened.

I moved backward, and the tentacles blocked the next wave of attacks by stacking on top of each other. Their combined force managed to stop Jung Ha-Yan's attack.

- Fun.

Rimoura said that, but she was biting her lips because her tentacles were losing against Jung Ha-Yan's clumps of mana. I wasn't sure how to describe this, but Jung Ha-Yan's magic consumed Rimoura's tentacles while moving forward. Jung Ha-Yan's magic seemed to be tearing Rimoura's tentacles apart.

'Shit… An innocent bystander is going to get hurt in the fight. Think about me as well!'

"*Roooaaar!*"

Craaaaaaaack!

"*Groooooooooowl!!!*"

Boooooooooom!

There was an explosion, and I could hear the members of the demon legion melt. The demon soldiers who appeared with Rimoura to give her the grand entrance earlier melted in an unrealistic way.

'What's going on… '

"Die!!! Die!!! Dieeeeee!!!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

The clumps of mana spurted thorns that pierced the heads of the demons, and as if it wasn't enough, the demons' heads exploded moments after being pierced. I couldn't identify the spells that Jung Ha-Yan was using, but I thought it was some kind of spell that she could still manipulate after casting it.

The thorns would inject mana from the clumps, and the mana would go berserk after

being injected, resulting in a gory explosion.

I felt like I was watching a miracle unfolding in real time. Jung Ha-Yan was displaying prowess that was so amazing it rivaled Benigoa's descent into my body. She swept away the demon legion by herself, and it was such a cathartic sight for some reason.

'What's… going on… damn it… '

"*Roooooooooar!!!*"

Craaaaaaaaaaack! Booooooooom!

'Is this real?'

Many different thoughts popped up in my head. I had allowed Jung Ha-Yan to come with me because I unconsciously thought that I had to spend more time with her. However, I couldn't help but contemplate my decision back then.

I wasn't sure if I was willing to take on the risk of carrying around a bomb that could explode at any moment.

'Shiiiiit…!'

At this point, I didn't have to think about it because she was way worth the risk. She was one of the puzzle pieces that I needed in the upcoming war, and it was such a marvelous sight to see her overcome the mana limits of mankind.

The majority of the demons in the surroundings were annihilated. I thought they were simply Rimoura's underlings, but every single one of them wasn't weak. If I had to categorize them based on the continental standards, they were at least epic rank. Still, they died as if they were nothing but air.

I finally understood why Kim Hyun-Sung—the war hero of our past lives—had taken so much care of Jung Ha-Yan.

"*Ha… Ha… Ha…!*"

'Jung Ha-Yan still hasn't reached her maximum growth?'

"I'm going to kill you. I'll tear you to shreds… I-I'm going to kill you!" Jung Ha-Yan

threatened.

- They were my friends, so I'm kind of sad.

"S-Shut up!! Shut up!!!" yelled Jung Ha-Yan. She unleashed another powerful spell.

'Seriously... What's... '

I stared agape as the fight between the two monsters intensified. Rimoura managed to survive Jung Ha-Yan's onslaught, so I thought it was now her turn.

However, it seemed that Jung Ha-Yan wasn't done just yet.

Magic arrows started flying toward Jung Ha-Yan, and Rimoura was careful not to hit any of the remaining demons.

"*Eeeek!!!*"

Magical chains emerged from the ground, and they were covered in flames that seemed capable of burning just about anything. Jung Ha-Yan's wind blades were also thick enough that I could actually see them with my naked eye.

Anemone's dark orb that devoured Laios and Jung Ha-Yan's ridiculous spells that I was seeing for the first time wreaked havoc in the surroundings. I couldn't see things clearly, but I could tell that the terrain was changing.

Dozens of tentacles flew toward Jung Ha-Yan, but she simply suspended them in mid-air with magic without moving even an inch.

Rimoura tried to approach her at the same pace as her tentacles, but there was no way that the crazy mage would allow her to do that.

Jung Ha-Yan changed the direction of her spells and placed traps around her to stop Rimoura's approach.

However, this was a fight where one party wanted to escape while the other wanted to give chase, so I thought that it wouldn't end soon.

Rimoura's smiling face finally cracked as she started to look a bit serious. She finally realized that the battle wasn't going the way she wanted it to go. She was suffering a

penalty that did not allow him to kill Jung Ha-Yan, so her actions were limited.

However, I reckoned that even if that penalty didn't exist, I thought that Rimoura would still have a hard time fighting against Jung Ha-Yan. In addition…

'Jung Ha-Yan is also suffering from a penalty.'

- That's it?

"*Eeeeeeeek!* Die!!! Die!!! Just die already!!!" Jung Ha-Yan shouted.

- You won't be able to protect him… I'll take him with me today, and I really feel bad for you…

"S-S-Shut up! Shut up…!" she yelled.

- How should I deal with him so that I can have more fun? I can definitely turn him into a man who won't be able to live without me… In a week's time, he won't even notice a human bitch like you. You're going to lose. You'll end up bawling on the ground.

"*Hiccup*… S-Shut Up…" she stuttered.

- Once we're done here, I think I should ruin his mind. I think it'll be best if I turn him into an idiot, so he won't be able to think of anything else. Then, I'll slowly have my way with this disgusting human. I think that's the best way to go about it. *Ha*…

"S-Shut… up… Shut up… Shut up!!! *Heuuuung…* Just die already! Die!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

When the battle started, it seemed as if the two were on the same level. However, the situation started changing as time went on.

'Experience really does make a difference… '

There was a reason why having enough experience was important.

Jung Ha-Yan was easy to provoke, and she had been using an unreasonable amount of mana to cast her spells. The *demon lord* definitely noticed that because she kept on taunting Jung Ha-Yan.

Jung Ha-Yan's furious face became filled with annoyance and anxiety because she discovered that she was starting to reach her limit. It wasn't really strange that she was fast approaching her limits because she still hadn't recovered from mana exhaustion.

I was sure she didn't have that much mana to begin with. The Heart of an Archmage allowed her to recover a portion of her mana while we were on our way here, but it didn't change the fact that she was still in a bad condition.

It didn't matter even if she carefully managed her mana consumption, she still wouldn't be able to guarantee her victory against Rimoura.

Unfortunately, the furious Jung Ha-Yan had been wantonly casting her powerful spells.

Eventually, Jung Ha-Yan's spells lost much of their firepower, which allowed Rimoura to take more space. This outcome wasn't really strange.

"*Hiccup… Heuuuuung…* Go away! Go awaaay! Go awaaaay…!" Jung Ha-Yan screamed.

She channeled a spell, but nothing happened when she cast it.

- How sad… Looks like you're empty.

"*Eeeeeeeeek! Eeeeeeeeeeek…!*"

Jung Ha-Yan definitely didn't want to give up because she pulled out a dagger and charged at Rimoura like a lunatic.

There was an explosion, and Jung Ha-Yan flew away.

She rolled on the ground a few times before stopping.

Rimoura approached Jung Ha-Yan and held her up by the hair.

Then, Rimoura slapped Jung Ha-Yan's cheeks before slamming her into the ground.

'You're going to kill her. Shit…! Stop it.'

I glanced at her, and Rimoura came back to her senses. She finally realized that she

had gone overboard because she nodded slightly.

Rimoura's two attacks destroyed Jung Ha-Yan. Jung Ha-Yan couldn't even create a barrier after exhausting all of her mana.

At this point, she was too weak to resist Rimoura.

"*Heuuuuung… Cough… Cough…* Oppa… oppa…!" she called out.

'Geez… you're breaking my heart… '

"Oppa… *Hiccup… Bleeeck…!* O-O-Oppa…" she repeated.

She was having difficulties moving, and she sobbed loudly when Rimoura wrapped her tentacles around me again.

She staggered up and ran after us, but she collapsed after taking just a few steps.

"Oppa… Please don't go…! Don't go… *Hiccup*… *Heuuuung*…" she cried.

'Don't do that… You're breaking my heart… '

"Don't take him… D-Don't… *Cough… Cough…* Don't take him away…" she begged.

- I'm going to take him away.

"*Hiccup… Heuuung… Hiccup!*"

"Ha-Yan…" I called out.

"Oppa… Oppaaaaa…"

Jung Ha-Yan desperately stood up and started walking slowly toward me, but she stumbled and fell to the ground.

She kept spitting out blood, and I could see why—it was all because she had sustained so many injuries that she basically looked like a tattered rag.

It broke my heart, but I had to put an end to this drama. If my goal were to fix Jung Ha-Yan's habit, I would have ended things here, but I had a bigger picture in mind.

“I-I’ll go with you. Please let her go…” I begged.

‘Nice line!’

“*Heuuuuuuuuuung…!* Don’t do that… Don’t do that, please… *Hiccup*…!” Jung Ha-Yan begged.

- You’re making me want to play with her a bit longer, but… I was planning on letting that woman live, anyway. And if you’re the price for letting her go, then don’t mind if I do.

“Thank… you…” I said.

“Oppaaa… *Hiccup*… Opaaaaa!! *Cough! Cough! Heuuuung…* Oppa…!” she called out.

I started floating up into the sky.

Jung Ha-Yan was horrified at the sight. She stood up with much difficulty and started running toward me, but she stumbled on a rock and fell to the ground. Still, she didn’t give up. She stretched her hand out toward me with her face covered in tears and snot.

She started crawling her way toward me with her hand stretched out in front of her as if she was trying to snatch me out of mid-air.

“I’m sorry. *Hiccup*… I-I’m sorry… It’s my fault…! *Hiccup. Hiccup*!” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“…”

“*Heuuuuung…* I’m sorry. I’m—It’s my fault!” she repeated.

“…”

“Please… Please… Please… *Hiccup… Hiccup.* Give me one more chance, oh God! Please… Please… Just once…!” she begged.

“…”

“*Hiccup… Hiccup…* Oppaaa…!” she called out.

"…"

"…"

"Live a good life…" I told her.

I smiled bitterly for the sake of a beautiful ending.

A part of me felt sad to see Jung Ha-Yan calling out to me desperately.

'This is what you call a soap opera.'

I couldn't help but nod at the ending I had orchestrated.

CHAPTER 483
SUPERSTAR L (1)

The scenery started changing, and I reckoned that we were moving pretty fast.

The ride was comfortable despite the high speed. I never expected that demons would have something similar to a carriage. I thought that they had prepared all this for me, but the tentacle woman sitting next to me was acting too natural in the carriage.

Anyway, the comfortable ride made me feel bad for Jung Ha-Yan as many thoughts popped up in my mind.

'I wonder if she managed to go home safely.'

I was worried. Of course, fixing her habit was part of the plan, but Jung Ha-Yan looked pretty pitiful earlier. She looked like a seven-year-old child throwing a tantrum and crying for snacks at the market, which was pretty annoying.

However, her heartwrenching cry and how she desperately begged me not to leave made me feel depressed.

'I feel like she's going to feel even guiltier... '

It was true that I put her in this situation so she could reflect on herself and start having a guilty conscience, but a part of me felt uncomfortable about all this.

Of course, I acknowledged that I couldn't do much about that, and I also understood how she felt when she had to apologize.

I was sure that Jung Ha-Yan never expected that a small fire would grow into a massive wildfire.

I thought about the possibility that she would do something radical.

However, I was still alive, so she definitely wouldn't do something like what she had

done in her past life.

Still, she was definitely feeling extremely guilty.

Personally, I felt bad as well, but…

'It's about time she starts reflecting on her actions.'

Naturally, I wasn't expecting her to change completely after going through all this. I was actually worried that she would get traumatized. However, I knew that she would learn about the concept of karma through this incident, which made me feel like clapping.

Karma was simple—what one had done would come back and get them one day.

Of course, karma didn't really apply to me. However, if my assumption was right and Jung Ha-Yan truly did learn to be afraid of karma, then I was sure that she would start limiting the scale of her actions.

I glanced to the side and saw the tentacle woman. The playful look she had when she fought Jung Ha-Yan earlier was gone. She looked pensive and serious, and I presumed it was because Belial had said something to her.

She had become completely different compared to when she was teasing me with her strange tentacles. She acted like she was taking care of a VIP. Rimoura felt my gaze and turned toward me to hand over a mysterious drink.

'Shit, that's disgusting. What is that?'

- Are you feeling uncomfortable about something…

"It's nothing. I'm feeling comfortable. It's just I'm curious if Ha-Yan is safe…" I replied.

- *Hm*.

"…"

- Please wait a moment. Let me check—Right now… *hm,* she has arrived at a place filled with humans, but it seems that she's unconscious. We included our message along with the girl, so I'm sure the humans are coming up with a plan right now.

'Looks like she managed to return safely.'

I was worried that she would kick up a fuss about saving me, but it seemed that it wasn't the case. Jung Ha-Yan probably thought that she needed help.

However, what bothered me more was the current status of the joint training.

'I'm sure it's a mess… '

I couldn't help but nod at Rimoura's news because things were going according to plan.

It seemed like Rimoura also understood really well what had to happen so that we would have the advantage in the future. It seemed that I would have to expect nothing less from Belial.

- And you don't have to worry about that crazy woman.

"*Ah*…"

- As I mentioned earlier, Belial cares about that woman, too… Our fight looked pretty violent earlier, but she should be able to recover without issues. Her current condition is also because she used magic beyond her limit. Anyway, rather than talking about boring topics like this—*Hm*—what do you think? We still have some time before we arrive at our destination.

"*Huh?* What are you saying…?" I asked.

- What did you think about earlier? I won't be able to do some of the things I had mentioned during my fight with that crazy woman, but if you like, I can make it so that you won't even think about the human female body anymore…

"I-It's fine. I'm okay," I stuttered.

I was afraid that something would actually happen.

Rimoura was beautiful, but I didn't feel comfortable around her. I shook my head after imagining what it would be like to be under the control of those wriggling tentacles.

Of course, Rimoura looked really disappointed because she probably didn't expect me to decline.

- That's unfortunate. If you're not satisfied with the way I look, I'm willing to change parts of my body.

"No, no. I appreciate the offer, but…"

- I'm pretty popular among the demons… I can make myself look a little younger or older.

"No, that's really not the reason. I really appreciate it, but I'm afraid that this stupid mortal will *genuinely* fall in love with the beautiful Rimoura…" I explained.

- You lied just now, but it still makes me happy. However, you don't have to say it like that. I'm not that great of a demon for you to speak formally to me, and I'm quite fond of you as well, even if Belial weren't here. Basically, you're my type. It's not just me. The demons who dislike you can only be counted on one hand, so you're definitely unique among the humans.

'Is this an insult or a compliment?'

- It is my first time meeting a human capable of wielding holy power despite having such a disgusting soul. I can feel your holy power, but your soul is absolutely filthy.

"Are you… are you fine? From what I know, holy power is fatal to demons…" I asked.

- That's not necessarily the case. It's true that I feel a bit uncomfortable, but your soul is more disgusting than the light you possess… How about I use fermented food as an example? Let's say cheese. Cheese can smell bad, but it tastes delicious. Don't you agree?

"*Ah*… yes…" I mumbled.

- Among the different types of cheese, you're a special cheese that has been fermented for so long that you're giving off this strong odor. Who won't like that kind of cheese? Obviously, everyone will want to have a bite, and I want to take a bite as well.

'I think she's actually insulting me… '

I became suspicious that Rimoura was actually trying to eat me, but her gaze told me that she was telling the truth. I was bothered by how demons' expressed themselves, but I was more stupefied by how I was basically a delicious piece of meat in their eyes.

Overall, it was a burdensome treatment.

'Don't do anything… '

- Tell me when you change your mind. I'm always ready.

"*Ahem… Hm.* I really appreciate the offer, but—*Ahem*. I know it's not enough to call it an apology, but if possible, let's proceed with one contract, even if it's small," I suggested.

Rimoura's attitude instantly changed. Her pensive, serious look blossomed into a bright smile. She looked like an insurance agent who had just succeeded in selling insurance to a customer.

'I guess this counts as an achievement.'

I started nodding upon realizing that this method was tempting enough for a demon to the extent that they would reveal that kind of expression. I had some expectations before I offered a small contract, but I felt happy upon confirming it myself.

- Really?

"Yes. We won't be able to do a direct contract since we're not from the same world, but I'm willing to proceed with a temporary contract. I feel grateful to see you so happy. *Haha*. I'm sure you're strong enough to make a contract with other humans…" I replied.

- It sounds like you have an idea of how our system works, so I'm telling you this: a contract isn't enough to increase our achievements. The contractee, the contents of the contract, and the results from that contract are important factors. Your previous contract with Belial increased his rank by 41, so I'm sure you get the idea.

"What?"

- Among the 72 Demon Lords, Belial was Rank 68, which is pretty low. Demons

below the top 10 aren't that powerful, and they do not have that much authority either. The fact that his rank increased by 41 was pretty rare—especially when the contract was just a temporary contract. I'm sure your foul soul and how you made the entire continent feel Belial's majestic presence were the reasons behind the huge increase. The powerful demons also said that a contract of that scale was pretty rare.

"*Ah*…"

- Think of it this way. How can our performance *not* increase after establishing a contract with you—the one they call Benigoa's Second Coming?

'She's right.'

- Assuming that you really get into a contract with me, I'll probably manage to enter the top 1,000 with this one contract. My rank will increase by 600.

'This is a really big deal.'

I expected that much because Belial was extremely nice to me, which made me realize that he had definitely profited a lot from our temporary contract. However, Rimoura's explanation made it obvious that I had underestimated it.

The Laios incident increased Belial's rank by 41 ranks. In addition, Rimoura was also expecting that her rank would increase by at least 600 ranks with one temporary contract with me.

If the demons under Belial's command were to proceed with establishing a contract with me, the power dynamic in hell would most likely change. Of course, it would only happen if the situation allowed it.

- W-Will you really get into a contract with me?

'Maybe I shouldn't have offered… '

"Yes, of course. You helped me a lot earlier. I think it'll be best if I tell you the contents of the contract later because you still have a lot to do," I replied.

- Sure. I already know what you have in mind. You're going to fool all the humans on the continent this time as well…

“It hasn’t been decided yet, but that is my plan for now,” I said.

- *Um,* Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

“Yes?”

- I’m really sorry about telling you this, but…

“Yes?”

- When you proceed with the temporary contract later…

“*Huh?*”

- I’ll be extremely thankful if you… give me a *slightly* important role. I’ll be sure to pay you back.

‘What the… the rumors are already at that level?’

Rimoura was Belial’s priest, so it was amusing how excited she looked at the idea of establishing a contract with me.

However, the sight also made me realize my current position.

Basically, the demons were like actors who wanted roles, and I was the casting director as well as the director of the entire stage.

My lips naturally curved up, and I started to feel proud of myself.

‘You’re living the easy life now, Ki-Young. I’m walking on sunshine!’

CHAPTER 484
SUPERSTAR L (2)

- We'll be arriving soon.

"It's closer than I thought. Is this where Belial was summoned?" I asked.

- Yes.

"Looks like he doesn't move to other locations," I commented.

- That's right. We can move freely, but because Belial is in a higher position than us, there's a limit on his activities in the real world. He basically can't leave that castle.

'Should I be relieved by that?'

It seemed like the system enveloping this continent was still functioning somewhat.

'So it's the difference between a Semi-Mythic and Mythic being. It must be like a suppressor on Mythic beings or something.'

The details were unknown to me, but I was sure that I would be able to figure out the answer as long as I thought about it.

A Mythic being could cause catastrophic damage to the continent, so it would be strange if a Mythic being could casually walk around the continent as if they were going out shopping.

A suppressor was necessary, and I was sure that it would prove effective whenever Belial was summoned. A slight stat adjustment was a type of suppressor as well. Of course, it didn't really matter to me if beings on the same level as Belial could move around, but it was better than letting them move freely.

'It's well designed.'

In hindsight, It was obvious, but I had just realized that this continent wasn't

designed haphazardly. Otherwise, the trolls managing this continent would have destroyed the continent long ago.

I could tell just by looking at Benigoa and that scummy Elune.

“Are you and Belial the only ones who can be summoned to the real world?” I asked.

- No. Every high priest cannot be summoned, but my comrades in the top 1000 have answered Belial's call. You’ll meet them soon, but an audience with Belial is the priority.

“I’m kind of nervous because it has been a while,” I said.

- No need to be nervous. The 27th Legion will always treat you nicely, and I’m telling you this out of concern, but regarding our promise earlier…

“I promise to give you a temporary contract, so you don’t have to worry,” I said.

- Thank you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

“But I can’t guarantee your role…” I added.

- As expected.

“I’m sure you already know, but this is very important. However, you don’t have to be disappointed. You’re already doing something important, and you’ve left a very strong impression as well. Belial also sent you to me,” I explained.

- That’s true, but…

“Belial definitely cherishes you because he entrusted you with an important mission like abducting the hero of the continent known as Benigoa’s Second Coming. I would like to give you an important role in the next part of the story, but I’m still writing the script. It’ll be a win-win for both of us if I manage to give you a good role, but I hope that you’ll understand that I can’t make any promises because of unknown variables.

- If that’s the reason, then I don’t mind it, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

“It’s not something I can decide on my own, so I’ll contact you once I’m done discussing the details with Belial,” I told her.

It was ridiculous, but the actress looked really nervous.

I was kind of nervous because this place was filled with Semi-Mythic beings, but I couldn't help but smile upon seeing Rimoura's face. I was sure that the other demons were in a similar situation as her. She had probably made the request about the role because she was afraid that I would change my mind after seeing the other demons.

- I feel like I keep talking about useless things.

"I understand. I won't forget what you did for me today, so please don't worry," I assured her.

- I feel a bit relieved hearing you say that. I really appreciate it. Anyway, let's head inside. Belial is waiting.

"Okay, Miss Rimoura."

Our short conversation ended, and we soon arrived in front of the audience chamber. I felt an unknown pressure boring down on me, but it wasn't hostile. It was probably the energy of a Mythic being.

I wanted to prepare myself a bit, but Rimoura opened the door as if she had no idea what I was going through.

However, I actually felt comfortable rather than feeling like I couldn't breathe. I lifted my head cautiously and saw an interior design that was vastly different from what was popular among humans.

'He sure has bad taste.'

There were many unknown meat pieces plastered everywhere, along with skulls belonging to unknown beasts. It wasn't organized, but it *felt* organized. There were antique-style decorations here and there, which gave me goosebumps.

- It has been a while, disgusting human.

However, the interior design wasn't as grotesque as Belial's appearance.

"This insignificant mortal greets the ruler of thousands of demons," I greeted.

Rimoura looked somewhat human. I couldn't quite describe Belial's appearance, but his looks instilled primal fear in me. I couldn't tell which one looked more normal among demons, but if someone asked who looked more like a demon, I would choose Belial.

He had the visage of a ranked 27 Demon Lord.

'I feel like he can transform as well… '

Rimoura mentioned that she was capable of changing her appearance, but I didn't think that a Demon Lord would change their appearance just because they didn't like how they looked.

Belial was capable of reading my mind, so I had to stop having silly thoughts.

I nodded to myself, and I heard his voice again.

- *Haha*… I already told you that you don't have to flatter me.

"I'm not trying to flatter you. My thoughts are all from the bottom of my heart. I really missed you, Belial. After sending you away like that last time, I regretted not being able to treat you better…" I said.

- You already know that you don't have to be humble in front of me. In the end, you were the one who proposed the contract rather than me. The same thing goes regarding what you just said about treating me better. I should be the one who should treat you better. Haven't you heard about it from Rimoura? I'm sure you profited a lot, but I profited the most from the previous contract, and it'll probably be the same this time as well.

"It's all for you, Belial…" I said.

- Don't say things you don't mean. Forget the formalities and have a seat. I prepared many things for you.

'This is why people need power.'

When I saw the many different dishes and drinks on the mysterious table, I was sure that Belial wasn't lying when he said that he wanted to treat me better.

I wasn't sure if they were food that the demons in hell enjoyed, but there were dishes I had never seen before.

The sight of the many different dishes made me realize that they knew how to eat as well.

- I'm sure there are dishes you're not familiar with, but they don't taste bad. Humans can eat those dishes, I hope you'll enjoy them. I'm sure this isn't enough compared to what you have done for me.

"I'm grateful," I told him.

- If I could, I would have given you some of my powers, but I can't do that right now, so let's save the fun for later.

"By later, do you mean…"

- Aren't you going to join us later? I'm not sure if you've noticed, but your rank is high enough for you to abandon your fleshly body here at your rank. Of course, it's still too early right now. Considering your abilities and fleshly body, ample preparations are necessary, but… 2,000 years should be enough.

'He already thinks of me as a demon… '

It was my first time feeling uncomfortable about being recruited. Now, I finally understood why Rimoura started being friendly toward me. I was sure she would still treat me with respect without Belial or her possible role.

I was sure she felt like making connections with a future co-worker and someone whom one of the 72 Demon Lords trusted was definitely appealing to her.

'Why are these bastards so sure of that?'

If I were to abandon my fleshly body and ascend, there would be a chance that Benigoa or Elune would try and recruit me. Therefore, I couldn't understand why they thought I would join them.

In addition, I could wield holy power.

However, Belial wanted to recruit me, so Benigoa and Elune definitely wanted to

recruit me as well.

- Your holy power bothers me a bit, but it won't be an issue. We have demons like Lucifer, after all. Anyway, it's not going to happen anytime soon. It's more important for us to wrap all this up rather than talk about what we should do in the far future.

"You're right," I said.

I glanced at Belial and saw him drinking wine to wet his dry lips.

- Come to think of it, you met Rimoura, right? What do you think of that child?

"She was a woman full of grace, and I know that you trust her. Since you chose her to start this incident, I had a feeling that perhaps one of the Demon Lords is backing her. Her acting skills are great, and I liked everything about her," I replied.

'Even her tentacles… '

- I received a lot of help from Rimoura, but I haven't been able to take care of her. I sent her because I wanted to take care of her a bit this time, so I'm glad to hear that you weren't upset with her.

"How could I be upset with her? I actually wanted to thank you for sending her. The first impression is the most important, and Rimoura has done more than enough to fulfill her role, so I'm sure she'll do well in the next important task. Yes, I believe it," I explained.

- No, no. I'll reward her separately for this. Normally, it's my job to take care of her, but as you know, this seat comes with a lot of responsibilities. Since our 27th Legion suddenly grew, there have been many internal issues. It would have been nice if I were capable of handling all the issues, but I can't lead a group without knowing my subordinates' thoughts.

"That's absurd…" I muttered.

- I can't be biased toward a subordinate I like, and I also can't get rid of a subordinate I dislike just because I want to get rid of them.

'This bastard… '

- It’s a really big problem. Don’t you agree?

‘You demon bastard! You really are a bastard… ’

I had a hunch about what Belial wanted to achieve in this incident. He wanted to get rid of those he disliked while showing his support to those he trusted.

A simple contract and siphoning negative emotions to become even stronger wasn’t just his goal. He wanted to reorganize the 27th Legion, and it seemed that he wanted to purge a few demons to do that.

‘I think my guys will be able to use them to level up… ’

This was a win-win situation for both of us.

‘Prepare yourselves, guys. If you get lucky, you’ll get a ton of experience points!’

CHAPTER 485
BLUE GUILD'S SITUATION (1)

"Miss Kim Mi-Young," I[1] said.

"*Ah*, Mr. Park Joong-Ki… I'm sorry. I didn't even greet you properly because I've been so busy. Have the items arrived yet?" Kim Mi-Young asked.

"Yes. I stored the supplies you mentioned in the warehouse while some were loaded onto the carriage for immediate transfer to the site. I'm planning on getting the guild master's approval once I'm done with the checks. If you're busy, I can do your task for you as well," I offered.

"It's fine. I'm busy, but it's imperative that I take care of my own tasks because they're important as well. Anyway, have the reinforcements arrived yet?" she asked.

"It'll take some time before they arrive because it's so sudden… In the Sacred Democratic Country, I've heard that the Templars, Holy Knights, and even the personnel of the archbishop were mobilized. This is an unprecedented situation, so I think the forces under the Vatican will be mobilized. It's the same for the other large cities. Father Basel even said that he'd head straight to the Federation instead of stopping by the joint training camp. There have been some discussions about that."

"That's…"

"I tried to talk to him as well, but he's a very passionate person… If it hadn't been for Miss Oscar and the other senators, I'm sure he would have immediately headed to the Federation," I added.

"Lindel's atmosphere must be unstable," she commented.

"It's not just Lindel. The entire Sacred Democratic Country is nervous. I checked the mid to small-sized cities on my way here, and they all looked gloomy, including the citizens. The majority of them were praying, and if I were to exaggerate a bit, I think the entire nation has stopped operating. Anyway, how are things here?" I asked.

“It feels like a funeral. It’s understandable, but… Mr. Park Deok-Gu is in an especially bad mood. Miss Elena fainted as soon as she heard the news, and both Miss Sun Hee-Young and Miss Jo Hye-Jin looked gloomy as well,” she replied.

“And Miss Jung Ha-Yan…”

“I’ve been bringing her food every day, but she hasn’t been eating any of it. I keep hearing her cry, and I can’t measure just how heartbroken she feels. She basically lost the Sub Guild Master right before her eyes… She’s also blaming herself for everything, which breaks my heart. Right after she arrived, she kept rambling about how it was her fault. I suggested that she rest because she seemed like she wasn’t in her right mind, but…” Kim Mi-Young paused.

“…”

“She hasn’t been seeing Mr. Park Deok-Gu, the Guild Master, or anyone else. She has also been rejecting any treatment from the priests. The guild master warned me that she might harm herself…” she continued.

“*Ugh*. I think being *too* nice can be a problem as well. I heard he got abducted while trying to rescue the evacuating citizens. Miss Dialugia said that he was still alive, which was a relief. In times like this, guild staffers like us have to be more aware of things so that they won’t have a hard time focusing on what matters the most,” I told her.

“Yes, you’re right,” she said.

I saw Miss Kim Mi-Young’s serious expression.

‘I think she’s overdoing it… ’

She pretended like nothing was wrong, but since she had been a member of the Blue Guild for quite a while now, I had an idea about how she was feeling.

‘Of course, this is hard for you… ’

Miss Kim Mi-Young had been working with the sub guild master for a long time now. He was like her savior who had saved her from her hellish life, so it wouldn’t be strange if she reacted the same way as others upon hearing the news that he got abducted by a demon.

I was sure that she wanted to cry and collapse to the ground.

However, the fact that she was working normally made me think that she definitely deserved the sub guild master's trust. I was sure that was the reason he recruited her to be the center of the Blue Guild's administrative department.

She definitely knew that taking care of her tasks was more important than being sad.

"Are you sure the negotiation with the other nations is going well?" I asked.

"We have received official approval for the Federation recovery plan. The plan will be carried in exactly one week, but…" Kim Mi-Young paused.

"Yes?"

"I'm not sure of this because I'm not a military expert, but I feel like we're lacking in many things. Some of the nations and large guilds are influencing even the smallest parts, and they're still arguing over the military formation of each nation…"

"To make things worse, Gellahan of Hellfire and Jamila from the Federation doesn't seem very determined about all this. It's as if they have already decided to abandon all the facilities within the Federation. It's sad…"

"They had spent a lot of time with the sub guild master, but they stopped caring about the sub guild master as soon as he was abducted," she answered.

"Those scum… I can't believe it…" I commented.

"I'm not sure if they don't want to acknowledge the fact that other kingdoms will be affected after the Federation or if they're not thinking about it at all. In the worst-case scenario, I believe the guild master is thinking about proceeding with the recovery plan with the Three Nation Alliance and the Republic," she added.

"I'm sure the Republic will join gladly," I said.

"It's a relief. I think they're trying to do whatever they can to recover their image. And the current president of the Republic is hostile toward demons. It's understandable because of what they had to go through in the war Jin Cheong led," she continued.

“But there are many—”

“—uncertain factors. However, it’s our job to manage those factors. Since the sub guild master is missing, we’ll have to take care of other tasks as well, so I suggest you prepare yourself, Mr. Park Joong-Ki,” she warned.

“Are you worried that something bad is going to happen?” I asked.

“…”

“…”

There was a moment of silence, and I was sure that we had the same thoughts.

The Blue Guild’s administrative team was famous for being way more competent than the administrative teams of other guilds, but it was undeniably because of the sub guild master—the honorary cardinal’s influence.

The two of us got worried about how much we could achieve without the sub guild master pointing us in the right direction. In addition, every single decision was critical.

The silence between us spoke a thousand words about that.

Basically, we were doubting if we could even do our jobs properly.

We continued walking in silence and eventually arrived in front of the Guild Master’s Office. I took a deep breath and knocked on the door.

“Come in,” said the guild master.

Miss Kim Mi-Young nodded, and I slowly opened the office door.

‘I’m sure he’s in shock because he’s really close to the sub guild master.’

I was kind of worried. He was trying his best to pretend like he was fine, even though he looked a bit haggard. In other words, the news had definitely affected him.

He looked unkempt—like he hadn’t been able to shave recently. He also looked like he didn’t get much sleep because of the dark circles beneath his eyes. Not only were

his eyes bloodshot, but he also looked nervous and anxious overall.

“No need for greetings. Just show me the documents that require my approval and leave… Actually, please wait a bit,” the guild master ordered.

“Okay…”

‘The atmosphere is… ’

It was different from usual. It was ice cold, and I unknowingly shivered.

‘Was he always like this?’

I couldn’t really describe it.

Getting the guild master’s approval whenever the sub guild master wasn’t around was part of the rules, so it wasn’t my first time seeing him up close like this. However, I could still remember that he definitely wasn’t emitting this kind of ice-cold vibe.

Of course, he always looked indifferent, but I could remember seeing him wearing a business-like smile, and he would always treat us nicely as well.

He had changed so fast and so radically that I couldn’t help but question if I was still looking at the same Kim Hyun-Sung before the news broke out.

“Is this all the supplies?” he asked.

“Yes. W-We got as much as we could… It hasn’t been that long since the war ended, so the supplies are a bit lacking. We have a surplus in some of the categories, but—”

“Please prepare another batch of the same items within three days,” he interrupted.

“Sorry?” Kim Mi-Young asked.

“Prepare it. It doesn’t matter how you do it, just prepare them,” he replied.

“When you say i-it doesn’t matter how—” she stuttered.

“Do I have to explain every little detail?” he snapped.

“N-No…” she answered.

“Do whatever you can to make sure that the supplies are even,” he repeated.

“Yes, sir.”

‘Shit… ’

“I’m sure you already know, but Mr. Ki-Young has been abducted. The Tactical Support Team, the Strategic Supply Support Team, and many of the administrative team’s tasks I haven’t mentioned will be handled by you and Mr. Park Joong-Ki. Not only will you join the joint meeting with Miss Hye-Jin in Mr. Ki-Young’s place, but you’ll also participate in official meetings, so please be prepared,” he explained.

‘I knew it.’

“I assume you have an idea about what’s going on,” he added.

“Yes… sir…” Kim Mi-Young meekly answered.

“Miss Kim Mi-Young…” he called out.

“Yes, Guild Master.”

“Please create a list of people you think will be a threat or will get in the way of the Federation recovery plan and submit it to me. Obviously, the list is confidential and top secret,” he ordered.

“…”

“I’ll give you two days. The faster, the better. You can ask Miss Lee Ji-Hye of the Black Swan Guild for help,” he told her.

“I’ll do my best,” Kim Mi-Young replied.

“You’re both competent, so I believe you’ll do well,” he complimented.

‘…’

My gut feeling had never been wrong, and the burden I had to endure was heavier

than I initially expected.

It wasn't like I couldn't understand what the guild master was thinking, but I couldn't express my thoughts properly because he wasn't acting like his usual self.

In addition, it seemed like he had ordered Kim Mi-Young to create a hit list, and he had also told her to do whatever was necessary to obtain more supplies.

'Is he telling us to loot small cities or burn down farms?'

Otherwise, it would be nigh impossible to obtain the same amount of supplies we had procured so far in the next three days. If we forcefully obtained the necessary supplies, the Blue Guild's image would undoubtedly be ruined.

There were many things that didn't sit well with me.

Yes, we lack supplies, but I couldn't help but question if we actually had to take extreme measures like this.

I bit my lips, hesitating.

"Guild Master…"

All of a sudden, the door was opened, and I saw a familiar face.

"Just state your business," the guild master ordered.

"I received a message."

"…"

"The mages are still checking the authenticity, but the message sent by the Federation looks like a m-magic hologram… and we saw the sub guild master. We're concerned if there are other traps…"

The messenger had just finished talking, but an intense, heavy pressure immediately pervaded the room.

I started feeling out of breath.

'W-What's this…?'

Even Miss Kim Mi-Young started trembling…

'I-I can't breathe…!'

---

1. Park Joong-Ki's POV ☜

CHAPTER 486
BLUE GUILD'S SITUATION (2)

My[1] legs trembled, and I felt like collapsing to the ground.

My legs felt like they didn't belong to me, so I naturally focused on making sure that I wouldn't collapse because I didn't want to embarrass myself.

I was once an adventurer, but my talent only allowed me to become a Rare-ranked adventurer.

However, since I was once an adventurer, I couldn't let myself fall first, especially when the pallid-looking and trembling Miss Kim Mi-Young was doing her best to endure it.

I bit my lips.

'Shit… '

I looked up and saw the guild master staring at the messenger with a grim face. I couldn't quite describe it, but he was definitely trying to suppress himself to the best of his abilities.

His behavior had changed, but it seemed that his habits had changed as well.

He was trying to suppress his fury, but the tinge of hostility coming off of him was making it hard for me to breathe.

It had only been a few seconds since the guild master's hostility pervaded the room, but it felt like it had been hours since then.

I was about to exhale the breath that I had been holding in because I couldn't take it anymore.

Fortunately, the guild master composed himself before it was too late and said cautiously, "Please bring it to the meeting room."

"*Ah*… B-But we haven't checked it for traps yet…"

"I won't repeat myself. Bring it. And…" the guild master trailed off.

"Y-Yes, sir," the messenger replied.

"The other party members… Actually, summon the party members aside from Miss Ha-Yan. Tell them to gather in exactly three minutes," he ordered.

"Yes, Guild Master."

"…"

When we were finally dismissed, I was finally able to release the breath that I had been holding in.

"*Ha… Ha…*"

"*Ugh…*"

Miss Kim Mi-Young bent down and started retching, but she quickly composed herself and stood up.

"Miss Kim Mi-Young, d-do we need to attend the meeting as well? He didn't say anything to us," I asked.

"I think it's best if we attend. He probably forgot to say it because he has a lot on his mind… He also mentioned that we have to attend the Blue Guild's official meetings. More importantly, we will be able to plan more effectively once we've seen the sub guild master's condition," she replied.

"That's true, but…"

"We might be able to gather hints as well. I'm sure that's the reason why he has decided to summon the party members. He probably decided to exclude Miss Jung Ha-Yan because he was worried about exacerbating her condition. *Whew*…" Kim Mi-Young exhaled at length.

"Let's head out. We should go there and wait…"

“Sure.”

I punched my unresponsive legs before walking. Soon, we arrived in front of the meeting room. I couldn’t feel the presence of many people inside the room, so the party members weren’t inside. However, I was sure that they would arrive soon enough.

I was worried that we would get kicked out, but the guild master nodded quietly upon seeing us.

At the sight, I had to acknowledge that Miss Kim Mi-Young was right.

I noticed someone else’s presence and turned my head to see Yoo Ah-Young, the blacksmith, and Lee Chang-Ryeol, the assassin. I bowed and saw them returning the gesture in kind without saying anything.

I figured that they had to have realized that a silent greeting was the best in the current situation. Anyway, they looked like they weren’t ready to talk about the sub guild master’s condition.

It hadn’t been that long since they joined the Blue Guild, but they looked as upset as the guild master.

The sub guild master helped Yoo Ah-Young a lot so that she would be able to adapt quickly to the Blue Guild. Therefore, I was sure that out of everyone who joined at the same time as her, she suffered the most shock of them all.

Blue Guild’s Chief Secretary, Miss Jo Hye-Jin, was sitting next to Yoo Ah-Young. She looked somewhat calm, but I could feel that she was different from her usual self.

I quietly took my seat at the corner, and the door opened once more, revealing the faces of a few people.

Park Deok-Gu walked into the room with bloodshot eyes along with Miss Hwang Jung-Yeon, the magic scholar, and Miss Han Sora.

I also saw Miss Sun Hee-Young, and she looked like she was in a daze. Miss Elena walked into the room as well after finally waking up from a fainting spell.

Miss Kim Ye-Ri and Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo showed up not long after the others.

There was a gloomy atmosphere in the room.

There was a moment of silence.

Miss Sun Hee-Young shattered the ice, which was unlike her.

She seemed to be on edge, which betrayed her usual sunny disposition.

'Is she really the Miss Sun Hee-Young that we know?'

Her expression looked so grotesque that it felt strange to call her the Saint of the Forsaken.

"So everyone is here aside from that dumb bitch. Is she still crying? Is that incompetent piece of shit still crying?"

"Hey, stop it already, Hee-Young noonim. I understand that you're upset, but Ha-Yan noonim is the most upset out of all of us. While we're on the topic, I don't think it's right for you to use those ugly words to someone who barely managed to survive. This is unlike you…" Park Deok-Gu pointed out.

"How could I not be worked up? Do you really think that Father Lee Ki-Young took that dumb bitch with him for no reason? If she had just done her job, then all this wouldn't have happened. I'm sure she completely forgot her job because she was excited about going out with him. I'm sure that everyone agrees—Mr. Lee Ki-Young needed someone who could protect him properly rather than a madwoman," she explained.

"That's…"

"I intentionally didn't summon Miss Ha-Yan here, Miss Hee-Young. I believe she needs to rest because she's still mentally unstable, so I think you can stop now," the guild master said.

"But…"

"I'm well aware of what you want to say, Miss Hee-Young. Once everything is done, I'll definitely take action, so please calm down. Your current attitude isn't helpful at all," he ordered.

"…"

"…"

"*Whoo*…"

"…"

"I'm sorry for making everyone feel uncomfortable. The guild master is right, I think I'm a bit too worked up. I'm sorry for ruining the atmosphere," she apologized.

"Hey, you don't have to apologize. I understand very well why you're on edge. By the way, did you call us here because we're going on an expedition sooner than planned?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"That's not it. The Federation recovery plan will proceed as usual, but depending on the situation, the recovery plan might begin a bit later than expected," the guild master replied.

"What are you hesitating for?" he asked.

"Still, it'll happen a lot faster than scheduled. I thought it was ridiculous when I heard that the preliminary investigation would take nine days to complete," Ahn Ki-Mo commented.

"If they say that it'll take that long, then I'll just head over to the Federation by myself, Ki-Mo hyung-nim," Park Deok-Gu said.

"We have been pressuring the other nations to pick up the pace on their preliminary investigation. Right now, I want you guys to focus on the upcoming battle and create strategies for it. However, the reason I summoned you here is different," said the guild master, "The Federation sent a message over to us. It looks like a video projection in a magic hologram containing Mr. Ki-Young's message. I wasn't going to show this to you, but I thought it would be best to show this to you guys, at the very least…"

"Perhaps Mr. Ki-Young hid some kind of message in the video," the guild master added.

"Is that true?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

“Yes,” he replied.

“I-I’m sure hyung-nim hid something because he has been telling me not to despair in the face of adversity. Our hyung-nim is smart, so I’m sure he came up with a plan,” Park Deok-Gu commented.

“I agree,” he said.

“So let’s go ahead and play the magic hologram… By the way, are you sure the demons aren’t the ones who sent it? Still, it could be a message from hyung-nim asking for help after escaping somewhere. Anyway, h-hurry up and play it,” he requested.

I knew it didn’t make sense, but the atmosphere started improving a bit at the idea that Park Deok-Gu had proposed. If Park Deok-Gu was right, then it wouldn’t be an exaggeration to say that the situation would improve dramatically.

However, the room became quiet when the magic hologram started playing.

“*Ah… Ahh…*”

It was so shocking that the trembling Miss Elena fainted once again.

Everyone was at a loss for words.

The magic hologram depicted a very straightforward image.

[…]

It was an unknown piece of meat sitting on a chair.

“W-What is that?”

“…”

It was difficult to grasp and explain.

No one was talking, but I was sure that everyone thought the same. The unknown piece of meat was moving slightly, so it was easy to deduce that it was still alive. However, the unknown piece of meat didn’t look *alive*.

It wouldn't be strange if it suddenly stopped moving.

"I-I think something is wrong…"

"…"

"Someone say something… Is that hyung-nim on the chair?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"…"

"T-That's our hyung-nim? A-Are you saying that's really him?" he asked again.

"…"

"There's no way that's him. I'm sure… I'm sure that's not hyung-nim! I'm sure this is a fake video that those dirty demons had fabricated…" he continued.

[…]

[Nice to meet you, everyone. I'm Lonovera, a high priest of the 27th Legion as well as Belial's loyal priest.]

"…"

[I'm sure you're shocked because you probably didn't expect us to greet you like this… The reason I'm talking to you like this is that Belial—the great ruler of thousands of demons—has a message that he'd like for me to deliver to you.]

"…"

[He also wanted me to show you how we're treating this human—the Chosen of that scum Benigoa. It should be easier for you to understand if you think of it like this—he wants to demonstrate the inadequacy and incompetence of Benigoa, the folly of attempting to establish a relationship with any gods, and the foolishness of trying to prevent the powerful Belial. He wants to show it all.]

[*U-Ugh…]*

[I'm sure you can see how we're treating this dumb human. This is the result—the result of rejecting Belial's hand and insisting on remaining devoted to Benigoa. Now,

this dumb human whom everyone calls Benigoa's Second Coming has become like this.]

[*Ahhh, ah, ack…!*]

[Look! He's suffering because he can't let go of his god! Use your dirty eyes and see how much pain he's suffering, how much pleasure he's feeling, and how he's desperately trying to reject the corruption, even at the cost of his life! *Haha*!]

[*Ah, ugh… Ack…]*

[Struggle in pain for as long as you can and die—you stupid, dirty, and incompetent humans.]

"…"

[The light of this continent is about to go out!]

[Be aware of your helplessness—feel it on your skin!]

[Useless humans of this continent—we are your fear.]

[Your enemy…]

[And your nightmare…]

"…"

"…"

"…"

[That is all.]

---

1. Park Joong-Ki's POV ☜

CHAPTER 487
CLICHE (1)

"You did well, Miss Lonovera. Your acting was outstanding. I wanted to give you 110 points out of a hundred when you said—we're your fear, enemy, and your nightmare," I complimented.

- Y-You're embarrassing me. I didn't do anything. It's all thanks to you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I simply carried out the task you assigned to me. You even wrote the script for me," Lonovera said.

"It's the least I can do. *Hahaha*. Your skills are the reason you managed to deliver it well. I really want to open my heart up and show you just how honored I am for being able to work with you," I told her.

- No, I should be the one thanking you for giving a demon like me such a big role. *Hehe*. Here, have a drink and try this as well. Say *ah*.

"*Haha*. Even if you don't take care of me, I can eat it myself, Miss Lonovera," I said.

- A-Are you embarrassed?

"Yes, but it's not because of this. I'm embarrassed because you keep thanking me. It's true that I gave you that role, but it's all because you're the best candidate for the role. I have no other intentions behind it. I was pleasantly surprised when you called Benigoa a scum—I almost jumped out of my seat," I replied.

- *Hehehe*. I'm thankful that you gave me the opportunity to insult Benigoa in front of the people of the continent. I'm sure you already know, but I don't really look like a demon, so I don't have much influence in the real world. But thanks to this, I'm sure that my name will spread even just a bit, and that makes me feel happy. Pretending to torture Benigoa's Second Coming was also exciting.

"*Hahaha*. Even if it isn't because of me, I'm sure you would've become a great demon that is capable of instilling fear into the continent someday. You just haven't had the chance to show your talents. There are also fewer disgusting humans capable of

summoning demons. Once this incident has been taken care of, I'll do my best to create an institution that officially trains black mages," I explained.

- There's no need to go that far. Of course, we'll be thankful if you do, but we're already well aware of your position here, so we don't want to ask too much. *Hehe*. Just thinking about it again really makes me feel happy.

"I feel the same. No matter how much I think about it, it's perfect," I agreed.

- Your acting about how you're suffering behind me was exceptional. I'd expect nothing less from the person whose soul is so disgusting to the extent of impressing Belial. B-By the way, when are you planning on ascending here?

"I-I don't have any plans of ascending there just yet. Belial said he would prepare many things for me, but he said that it would take about 2,000 years. Anyway, why are you asking?"

- I-It's nothing.

- Lonovera must be interested in you, Father Lee Ki-Young.

"Mr. Ballitos, you're going too far. How could a high priest of the 27th Legion be interested in a lowly mortal like me? I'm grateful, but I'm worried that you've made Miss Lonovera feel uncomfortable," I commented.

- *Hahaha*. How could we call you a lowly mortal? You possess a pathetic mortal fleshly body right now, but you'll end up being our comrade down the road. I may even end up serving you. Based on your achievements so far, I'm sure you'll be within the top 500 and with more achievements, you'll be in the top 100.

'So why do you keep treating me like your co-worker? You guys… '

"*Ahem*."

- If you do end up ascending here later, please don't forget Ballitos—

"How could I forget your name, Mr. Ballitos?" I interrupted.

- I'm sure it's not enough, but this is my gift. Please think of it as a display of my appreciation.

“You didn’t have to…” I commented.

- I’m not sure if you’ll like it, but please take a look. I’m sure you won’t be disappointed.

- My gift is not enough as well, but I prepared something.

“*Ah*, Miss Rimoura. I’m really embarrassed to see you do this,” I said.

- Please accept it. I want to show how grateful I am to you.

“I feel bad because I feel like I’ve been on the receiving end all this while. It would be nice if I could give you all something, but sadly, my life revolves here rather than where you live…” I told them.

- Don’t worry too much. The fact that you’re with the 27th Legion is a really big favor to us.

- Rimoura is right. *Hahaha*.

“I’m truly grateful for your praise. *Hahaha*,” I laughed.

‘This is heaven. Heaven.’

The entire Blue Guild was definitely busy right now, so I feel kind of bad for them.

However, I was definitely in heaven right now.

Many different delicacies and drinks I had never seen before were laid out in front of me, and I couldn’t help but think that we were having a luxurious feast. The chairs were really comfortable as well despite their hideous look.

The way the maids massaged my shoulders and legs made me feel like I was in a professional massage salon. I knew I would receive great treatment, but the treatment I was receiving was better than I initially thought.

Lonovera started feeding me personally, and I could tell that she was in a good mood because of the big role I just gave her. And what about the gifts behind me? Those treasures couldn’t be found on the continent, so they were basically priceless.

'I can take those treasures and just tell the members that I got it them as loot… '

I even thought that it wouldn't be so bad to go to hell. I had no idea what Benigoa and Elune were going to offer me, but rather than enjoying a boring ascetic life, I thought it would be better to live the rest of my life as an amazing demon.

Benigoa had never given me anything other than responsibilities, while Belial gave me delicious drinks and treasures, so I obviously preferred Belial.

Of course, it was still too early to think about where I would go. However, unless Benigoa swore to live the rest of her days as my slave and treat me like a noble—actually, even if she offered to do that, it could be more beneficial to join Belial.

'There's no point thinking about the far future… '

I had to handle the ongoing situation first. We had dinner after the beautiful introduction video. Rimoura's expression bothered me a bit because she was staring hatefully at Lonovera, who was sitting next to me.

Rimoura looked kind of jealous of Lonovera's role, and she seemed worried that I might abandon her. Of course, I could understand why she was worried, but I still hadn't decided on who would take on what role.

'You were chosen by Belial, so don't worry, Rimoura. Unfortunately, she still won't believe me even after I told her that.'

She was basically filled with doubts and suspicion. It felt like I was watching actresses waging a war of nerves in real time. Whenever Lonovera fed me food, Rimoura would fill my empty cup, and they weren't the only ones doing this.

The male demons would do the same. Of course, their methods were different from the two, but I was sure that they were aware that this was their golden opportunity because the number of *gifts* I was receiving kept on increasing.

'I've already made up my mind.'

The ones who would get to live, the ones who would die, the ones who would be abandoned, and the ones who would go up in rank—I had already categorized them.

Belial manipulated the list, but I didn't really think that it was a bad idea. However,

removing the bad apples from the renowned soft-liner 27th Legion still required a ton of work.

'Belial is pretty reasonable… '

Between those who knew how to take care of hens that laid golden eggs and those who were dumb enough to kill those hens—between the two of them, it was obvious which side would receive more benefits.

I thought about it hard and long, but the hard-liners seemed like they wanted to make it big as soon as possible. I was technically managing the continent right now, so I preferred the soft-liners.

'As long as I'm helpful… '

A few minutes ago, I told myself that I would think about the future once the ongoing situation was done. However, I started thinking that there was a huge chance that I might start working with Belial two thousand years later.

Therefore, it wouldn't hurt to leave a good impression.

I looked at the other end of the table and saw someone drinking by himself. He seemed dissatisfied with the situation, and anyone could tell that he didn't fit in with the 27th Legion.

He was a very muscular large-framed man. He had six horns and four eyes. He was definitely a warrior, considering that he had a large ax next to him as if it was his lover.

The perverted Lonovera had a thin tail, which kept on swinging back and forth. She also had tiny wings on her head. Meanwhile, the tentacle woman, Rimoura, looked just as beautiful as a goddess.

They exuded a different air compared to Ballitos, who was emitting his virtuous aura like he was trying to show off that he was unique among the demons of the 27th Legion.

'Donovan, demon rank 1,256.'

They would provide the members of the Blue Guild with valuable Experience Points.

'He's a Semi-Mythic demon, but… '

It was possible. Rimoura or Lonovera would actually be a bit more of a difficult opponent than him. Naturally, I thought about how the Blue Guild would struggle to fight strategically rather than using brute force. It would be difficult for them to do so, even if Jung Ha-Yan, Kim Hyun-Sung, Cha Hee-Ra, and Elena were present at the same time.

However, I had a feeling that they would win.

'I'm the only one who's always thinking of you guys… '

Of course, there were times when I broke their hearts, but this was all for the sake of the guild's bigger picture. I was worried that the canvas might rip because the picture I was trying to draw was too big.

Fortunately, things were still going according to plan.

'It'll take about a week until the Federation recovery plan goes into action.'

The guild members should have already watched the magic hologram, so I was sure that they were anxious right now. Based on my understanding of the members, I was confident that they had decided to speed things up by two days.

Considering the Federation's response time, it would definitely take more than a week for them to respond.

In other words, they had to do something extreme to speed things up.

Of course, there was still a limit to that despite the extreme measures that they might take.

I looked around and cleared my throat. Everyone promptly stared at me.

They probably realized that I had something to say.

"*Ahem, ahem…*"

- Is there something you would like to say?

“It’s more like I have a message I need to deliver. Anyway, I’ll be holding a brief interview tomorrow.”

- *Ah*…

“It’s about time for me to officially announce the roles… I would have done it earlier, but Belial said that he wanted everyone to have a fair chance. Therefore, I needed ample time to prepare. I apologize for the delay,” I continued.

‘Belial really owes me one… ’

“The weight of each role is different, but please keep in mind that every role is important,” I added.

- Of course. Every role is important. S-So can you tell us which roles we can apply for?

“I think it’ll take a bit too long for me to tell you all the roles here, but the most important roles are the Four Heavenly Kings. You should think of it as an important role that allows you to stand the closest to Belial to support him any time,” I replied.

- The Four Heavenly Kings…!

- T-The Four Heavenly Kings…!

‘So they really like this kind of thing… ’

It was a bit of a classic, but the Four Heavenly Kings couldn’t be taken out in the advent of the demon king.

There was a reason why cliches were effective.

“*Ah*, before anything else, please record another video today, Miss Lonovera. Please make it a *bit* more violent this time. *Hahaha*,” I requested.

- It would be my honor!

Of course, rescuing the princess who was abducted by the demon king was a cliche considered one of the classics.

CHAPTER 488
CLICHE (2)

'The royal road never falls.'

Out of the many scenarios, there was a reason why I chose this cliche. It was safer to choose a scenario with proven effectiveness rather than take a risk that could make the situation even worse. The same was true for the matter concerning the 27th Legion. Of course, this task was more important.

I had a lot on the line, so I had to focus on many things. This project could take care of many things at once, and it was obvious when looking at Benigoa's bankruptcy issue, which was one of the tasks with the highest priority in the ongoing situation.

'I'm already seeing the effects, so my assumption wasn't wrong.'

The demon army was summoned to the continent, and it was an unprecedented situation. The few video recordings had already been broadcasted all over the continent, and many knights started to gather from all over the continent to respond.

[Details of the Kidnapping of the Honorary Cardinal. Father Basel Needs Your Prayers More Than Ever. - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Lindel Daily Report.]

[Prayer Meeting in the Square. Father Basel's Tears. - Vatican News]

[Oscar, Leader of the Democratic Country, Will Do Her Best to Get Rid of the Demons on the Continent. - Democratic Daily]

[Father Lee Ki-Young's Golden Time is Estimated To Be 10 Days At Most. Kim Hyun-Sung, Guild Master of the Blue Guild, Vows to Rescue Him. - Continental Newspaper]

[Re-Examination of Father Lee Ki-Young's Past Life. An Unexpected Incident After He Went to Help the Refugees. - Celia Weekly News]

[Ito Sota, the Demon Worshipper, and Jin Cheong, the Demon Summoner. The Result the Two Wanted for the Continent. - Democratic Newspaper]

[Archbishop Jayna Believes Benigoa Will Help. A Prayer Meeting Will Open All Over the Continent Starting Today Until the Mission Ends. - Democratic Newspaper]

It was great news. Prayer meetings were happening every day all over the Sacred Democratic Country, and I was sure that the quality of their prayers had changed. The ordinary citizens and priests probably prayed from the bottom of their hearts, which would surely affect Benigoa. The prayer meetings happened all at once all over the continent, so it would be strange if they weren't effective.

I didn't know exactly how much holy power Benigoa needed for her to recover from bankruptcy, but she would surely recover a huge chunk of her holy power before the ongoing situation was resolved.

In addition, compared to Kim Hyun-Sung's suspicions being lifted off of me, the leash I finally managed to put on Jung Ha-Yan wasn't that big of a deal.

In other words, there was a chance that he would confess his status as a regressor once everything was done. He was probably thinking that the ongoing situation happened because of him.

'If I had just told him that I'm a regressor, this wouldn't have happened at the very least.'

I was sure he was having that kind of thought. I got excited at the thought that he would finally tell me things that I had been wanting to hear from him.

'Leveling up those guys is just a bonus… '

I would be able to get rid of all evil, remove the hard-liners within the 27th Legion, and maintain the equilibrium, so I would naturally go all out on this ongoing incident. In addition, I was sure that the high priests of the 27th Legion were desperate as well.

Their motives were different from mine, but their desperation became the reason for them to synergize with each other.

'Do you like the Four Heavenly Kings that much?'

It was sure they were thinking about clinging on to me at the cost of their lives. When I recalled the time I had spent last night with the high priests, I couldn't help but start laughing. Their faces were full of desire to play the role of one of the Four Heavenly Kings at least once. Of course, Donovan was the exception. He was interested, but he didn't want to play along with a human.

'Idiot… '

He looked like one of those oldies who were incapable of following the trend.

He would have to die as one of the Four Heavenly Kings, so his uncooperative attitude started bothering me. However…

'Muscle heads like him are easy to tempt… '

I wouldn't even consider recruiting him as work if Belial decided to help me.

I smiled while looking at his profile.

Soon, the door opened, and I saw a familiar figure.

The casting was about to begin. I decided to speak in a serious voice because the casting was the first step of any important project out there.

"Contestant number one," I called out.

- Here. I'm Rimoura, contestant number one.

The polite tentacle woman looked a bit nervous. I was worried that she wouldn't show her true potential because she looked nervous. However, she nodded when I spoke words of comfort.

"You don't have to be so nervous, Miss Rimoura. As I mentioned before, this is just a formal procedure."

- But…

"It's really just for formalities, so don't be nervous. *Ah*, before that, please fill out this

questionnaire," I requested.

- Sure.

I already knew her nature, but we had to go through with the verification process. I smiled when I saw Rimoura writing down the appropriate answers on the questionnaire.

"Let's see. As expected, you applied for the Four Heavenly Kings role and…"

- I'm not sure if the role will fit me, but I'll do my best.

"If you want to maximize your impact for your first public appearance, then there are other roles suitable for you. This role also requires more acting skills than the other roles, and you're also too beautiful to play this kind of role…" I remarked.

- I appreciate the compliment, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I'm very happy.

"*Kgh*. You'll pass with flying colors if you apply for a different role. Are you sure you're okay with this?" I asked.

- Of course.

"All right, let's see it."

Belial himself had nominated Rimoura. The fact that she managed to obtain the trust of the Demon of Lies and Instigation was a good enough reason for me to consider her, but I couldn't just give her the role she wanted.

As I mentioned before, the most important task was to wrap this up beautifully.

'If worse comes to worst, I'll assign her a role that's not too impactful.'

There could be a controversy about how I was giving her special treatment, but Belial himself had nominated her. Similar to the idol debut program of broadcast companies, I had to be like them and use some of my influence.

Honestly, I wasn't expecting much from her, but the sudden change in the atmosphere rendered me speechless. She was so good that she was comparable to Ahn Ki-Mo and Kim Ye-Ri, who were slowly developing into professional actors.

There was a popular saying that the atmosphere in the room would change whenever a real actor started acting, and they were not lying at all.

'Actor Ri, you're good at getting into the role. Amazing. Simply amazing. Nice. Where has a gem like you been hiding all this time?'

I felt like I was going to get sucked into her eyes, and she was emitting an unknown aura rather than mana.

- H-H-How could I… be destroyed like this? How could I be defeated like this?!

'Nice breathing and vocals.'

- Don't think that this is the end, you pests! The 27th Legion will return. We'll return to this continent one day, and we will make each and every one of you uncivilized humans suffer! You'll become fleshly bodies that can neither die nor live, and you'll suffer in the pit of fire for eternity! Mark my words, you pests! We…

'Wow, look at her gaze. They're terrifying.'

- We'll return!

'Her voice is giving me goosebumps.'

- Rimoura of the 27th Legion will never give up until every single human pest has been stomped to death! I'll shred all of you into pieces! I'll kill you all! I'll kill you aaaaaall!

Her tentacles abruptly shot up like porcupines with their quills pointing up. Tears of blood rolled down her cheeks, and she quivered incessantly in fury. She bit her lips hard, and they started bleeding.

For some reason, the sight looked familiar. She reminded me of…

'…Jung Ha-Yan.'

Jung Ha-Yan acted similarly once she was extremely angry. It seemed that Rimoura had learned a lot from her previous encounter with Jung Ha-Yan.

I wasn't certain, but it felt as if she had used Jung Ha-Yan as a benchmark.

Since the role required the actor to instill fear into the expedition party, I thought it would be impossible with Rimoura's appearance. However, she completely overturned my expectations. Not only did I unexpectedly stand up, but I also started clapping.

"T-That was perfect. *Wow*… You did not use killing intent or mana, but your performance was still great. Honestly, I thought you'd find it difficult because of your appearance, but it was so perfect that I'm at a loss for words. Really…" I said.

- Is that… true?

"Yes. Why would I lie about it? Now I understand why Belial trusts you so much, Miss Rimoura. *Hahaha*. I finally understand why you're the gem of the 27th Legion," I continued.

"Y-You're embarrassing me, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I just got a hint from that crazy woman.

"That's not important. What's important is your acting skills and the fact that you managed to play the role properly. There's no need for me to say anymore, and there's no need for you to wait either," I said.

- What?

"*Hahaha*. It's kind of early, but I believe the role was made for you, Miss Rimoura. I need to interview the others as well, but I don't think I need to think about this role any longer… I'll cast you for the role. I'm looking forward to working together with you," I replied.

- *Kyah!* Thank you!

She released a short gasp, which was unlike her, but it made me feel better. I started feeling warm and fuzzy because the project was slowly taking shape. Unfortunately, the warm and fuzzy feeling inside me didn't last that long.

'Ha… '

- W-W-What did you say?

There were demons who kept on stuttering like Jung Ha-Yan…

- They were the weakest of the Four Heavenly Kings. Don't you think you're being too arrogant when you just barely managed to get rid of them?

And there were demons who read the script as if they were reading a book…

The acting skills of the leading actors weren't bad, but the leading actors wouldn't shine without the supporting actors.

I started feeling like bringing over Ahn Ki-Mo, Kim Ye-Ri, and Park Deok-Gu here.

"Contestant number 34."

'A landmine!'

"Contestant number 49."

'You won't be enough… '

In the end, I started thinking about decreasing the number of lines of the other kings.

Finally, Donovan—a seeded nominee for the Four Heavenly Kings role—slowly walked into the room. He looked like he was in a bad mood. He was known to be a serious and strict man, so he naturally wasn't happy to see us *playing around* like children.

'Let's see… '

"Contestant number 56. *Ah*… it's Mr. Donovan. Mr. Donovan. I'm extremely honored that you have decided to participate. As expected—"

- Stop. Stop making fun of me before I rip that dirty mouth of yours, you pest.

"…"

- I have no intention of playing along with your childish games. I only came here because Belial asked me to do so. I'm not planning on doing any interviews or auditions, and I'm not going to do anything you ask me to do.

'You… bastard.'

I expected it, but he was even more uncooperative than I thought.

I clenched my fists tightly, but I smiled and pretended like I was happy.

CHAPTER 489
A DEMON MUST ACT LIKE A DEMON TO BE A DEMON (1)

- Disgusting bastard.

Donovan, the cancerous member of the 27th Legion. He was an uncompromising warrior and was currently a new member of Belial's army. Personally, he was the type of individual that I despised the most. Unlike Rimoura, Lonovera, and Ballitos, his nature was the complete opposite of Belial, and if I had met him without knowing anything, then I would have been doubtful if he was even a member of the 27th Legion.

That was how unsuitable Donovan—the scapegoat—was from the legion, but…

'This is all in the past.'

Before Belial's army became the 27th Legion, he was still the leader of the 68th Legion.

I was sure Belial was desperate to climb the ranks because the 72nd Legion was the last legion among the 72 Demon Lords. I was sure his position was worse before he became one of the 72 Demon Lords.

He had definitely recruited any Tom, Dick, or Harry for the sake of increasing the size of his army. It had to be the reason why his army was so disorganized.

'That's why this guy is trash… '

Of course, I knew that Belial's nature was hopelessly shitty.

'So you've grown enough in size, huh?'

However, Belial also knew how to prioritize quality over quantity, especially now that there was no way he was going to be demoted after becoming the 27th Demon

Lord among the 72 Demon Lords.

It was understandable that he was trying to create a solid army, but abandoning his subordinates who had been working hard for his sake was still a scummy move. I was sure he had his own reasons, but he had to have realized that it would be dangerous for him to get rid of them with his own hands.

Therefore, he was trying to use me to get rid of his *incompetent* subordinates, which was such an asshole move for me.

I had no choice but to nod while smiling because I still had a lot to learn. The world was big, and there were lots of scummy people out there. It was also the moment I realized that the darkness still hadn't completely engulfed Light Ki-Young.

'It's like hitting two birds with one stone, so it's good for me. Honestly, I feel kind of bad for him, but I don't anymore.'

I got what I wanted, so there was no need for me to feel bad. The most important thing right now was to quickly get out of this formal meeting and move on to the next stage.

I was about to speak, but Donovan interrupted me with an annoyed look.

'It should be easy, but I should still take it slow.'

Donovan was the lead actor, and he would have the most important role in this audition of evil.

- I'm just here to pass the time, so don't think about talking with that dirty mouth of yours, human.

"..."

- Honestly, I'm not happy that a scum like you is standing beside Belial. If I could, I would have already wrung that weak neck of yours.

"..."

I kept on smiling at him, but it was ridiculous how he kept acting hostile toward me. He emitted a murderous intent that made me want to run away and escape, which

was kind of shocking because I knew that he would do that to me.

Fortunately, I had a solution for this, so I continued talking with a smile.

Donovan was surprised to see me talking while smiling.

“You must fill out the questionnaire, Mr. Donovan. I needed to provide proof to Belial that you came here. I already knew that you weren’t happy about this project.”

- Looks like you’re looking down on me. Didn’t I tell you not to talk with those dirty lips of yours?!

“You pass,” I said.

- What?

“I said that you passed, Mr. Donovan,” I repeated.

- It seems like you really don’t know your place. If you’re acting this way because you have Belial’s support, you’re making a big mistake, human.

“No, that’s not it, Mr. Donovan. I always engrave the words of the great high priests on my heart. I know my place very well. I told you that you passed because it’s Belial’s will, so please don’t be angry,” I explained.

- What… are you talking about?

“What do you think about the current 27th Legion, Mr. Donovan?” I asked.

‘Coaxing an idiot isn’t that hard.’

- I just asked what the hell you’re talking about.

“The answer is in the question I asked, Mr. Donovan. Please don’t be angry and answer this mortal’s question. I’ll ask one more time—what do you think about the current 27th Legion, High Priest Donovan?” I asked again.

-…

“I’m sure you already know the answer. The 27th Legion is…” I deliberately trailed off

to observe his expression.

-…

“…weak.” I continued.

- It’s not weak. How dare you judge the strength of the 27th Legion?!

“I’m not talking about strength. I’m talking about the mentality. A long time ago, when Belial was still the leader of the 72nd Legion, the 27th Legion wasn’t like this. The 27th Legion was filled with courageous warriors overflowing with fighting spirit. The 27th Legion of the past was smaller, but the warriors were strong and unyielding. Don’t you agree?” I asked.

- Stop talking shit when you don’t know anything. You dirty human…

“However, the young demons these days aren’t like that. Rather than the glorious war filled with blood and guts, they have become businessmen that are more focused on contracts and results. It can’t be helped because trends are ever-changing. I’m sure that they simply realized that it was the easiest and safest route to success. Basically, you’re a hero living in the glory of the heyday, so it’s only natural that real warriors like you are dissatisfied with the current status quo,” I continued.

- So what are you trying to say?

“I’ll get straight to the point. Belial said he wants to walk the centrist path,” I replied.

- What?

“The unification of hard-liners and soft-liners. He’s trying to walk down the difficult path,” I added.

-…!

“It seems that Belial is also longing for the glorious days, Mr. Donovan,” I continued.

I checked his reaction and saw tears in his eyes, and it was a reaction that was unlike a demon. His feelings were none of my business, but I had a feeling that he was overwhelmed with emotions.

‘So even crocodiles cry… ’

My heart broke because I couldn’t use the famous line—Cry and prove your innocence!

I clenched my fists and continued our smooth conversation.

“No matter how you look at it, the 27th Legion is currently walking in the direction of soft-liners. Belial felt bad for the demons who weren’t that strong physically, so he decided to take them in. However, he had no choice but to acknowledge the fact that the result wasn’t that great. Right now, those young demons are the leaders of the 27th Legion. In the end, it seems like Belial is troubled because the army is losing its glory and honor. Naturally, I understand how you’ve been feeling these days, Mr. Donovan,” I explained.

-…

“I believe you’re unsatisfied about many things, and even after reaching the top, you’ll still have no choice but to listen to the opinions of the majority. However, the 27th Legion’s current path isn’t that strange because of the ever-changing trends, so please don’t harbor resentment,” I added.

- I have never resented Belial.

“That is the reason Belial told me to make you the key member of this project. He also told me to tell you this secretly,” I said.

-…

“He said he wants to empower you and the hard-liners within the army to form an equilibrium with the demons like Rimoura, Lonovera, and Ballitos. Belial wants to recruit you as one of the Four Heavenly Kings who will assist him in the future. He also believes that this project is the start of walking down the centrist path. If you think I’m lying, you can ask Belial yourself, Mr. Donovan,” I told him.

- There’s no need for me to confirm since I've always thought of Belial as a centrist. The centrist path… the centrist path.

“This step is a very small step to him personally, but it’ll be a meaningful step because it’ll help the 27th Legion take one step ahead. Mr. Donovan, once you’ve

accepted my offer, please engrave on your heart the fact that you're part of the 27th Legion. You're the key to this plan, Mr. Donovan," I said.

-…

"This is Belial's will, Mr. Donovan," I added.

I noticed him staring intently at me.

'Did I get caught?'

I couldn't help but think that way for a brief moment, but there was no way he would catch me red-handed. I even used Belial for this, so there was no way he would be suspicious of me.

- You.

"Yes?"

- You're not as rotten as I thought.

"I-I appreciate that you're thinking that way," I stuttered.

- Do you agree with him?

"How could a lowly mortal like me give an opinion? I'm just a man doing whatever Belial tells me to do…"

- I asked if you agree with him, human.

"Of course."

-…

"The path that Belial wants to take isn't going to be easy at all, but if the 27th Legion takes that path, not only will the army grow a lot, but I'm sure that it'll also rejuvenate the lifeless hell and usher in a new era. The hard-liners, soft-liners, and centrists. The forces of hell are currently divided into two camps, but Belial's path will instantly divide hell into three camps. This is what you call dividing the world into three," I continued.

- Dividing… the world… into three…

"The 27th Legion will soon become one of the leaders of hell, so please leave your sword to me, Mr. Donovan," I suggested.

'Will Ki-Young Coin go to the moon?!'

I could see that Donovan's opinion of me was improving, and his gaze toward me was softening as well. However, it was a bit scarier than cute to see him hesitate, and that was when he suddenly stretched his fist toward me.

'Is this bastard crazy?!'

I was stupefied, but his fist was moving slower than I expected, so I was confused. In addition, he also broke out into a cold sweat just to control his strength. I wasn't sure if this was the right description, but he looked as if he was trying his best not to kill an ant while trying to touch it.

I wasn't sure what to do. I raised my fist in response, and I felt a slight shock.

'What are you doing, you crazy bastard?'

And that was when he explained shyly…

- Punching each other makes us friends…

'Ah… No wonder people have been abandoning you. It's because you're still using past trends.'

"It's an honor," I said.

- Two thousand years. It's longer than I thought, but I'll be waiting for the day we fight together, human. No, my friend.

I felt bad, but I was sure that day was never going to come because an unfortunate accident would claim this bastard's life during the upcoming war.

'I feel bad for Donovan, and it's unfortunate that he has been making bad friends.'

As an apology, I decided that I would bring the most beautiful flowers to his grave—

no, I had no choice but to promise that I would do that.

CHAPTER 490
A DEMON MUST ACT LIKE A DEMON TO BE A DEMON (2)

The chosen Four Heavenly Kings were the following demons—Rimoura, Donovan, Ballitos, and Carpediac. Lonovera was sad that she didn't become one of the Four Heavenly Kings, but this was the best decision.

'She had already played many roles, and she has made way too many appearances.'

It was good to see faces that had already been seen, but the debut of a new face was great as well. I was worried that Lonovera would attract all the anger in the world because of her frequent appearances.

Speaking of the new debut, the demon named Carpediac looked ordinary in many ways, but their acting was impactful.

Anyway, I worked hard in distributing the big and small roles. I was planning on splitting the demon army into four groups, but we needed supporting actors here and there.

In order to create an exciting war, there had to be demons who would act as contrasts, supply officers, mobile strike forces, and even reinforcements.

It was a bit annoying to assign important roles because of the level of detail necessary for the roles to succeed, but those details would improve the project's level of completion.

The mise-en-scène couldn't be overlooked. In some ways, it was the most important part. I couldn't let the Four Heavenly Kings of Belial fight on the battlefield, and everyone also knew that each Heavenly King had to possess a background that was suitable for them.

The film would be shown all over the continent, so the details had to be detailed enough and correct—from the location where they would first encounter the

humans to where the climax of their story would take place.

Each and every Heavenly King had their own story and strategy, so there were many things that had to be correct and detailed enough to the point that I couldn't help but be on edge about every intricate detail.

It couldn't be helped since it was going to be a huge event, but the high priests were surprised because I was slightly annoyed.

Today was the same…

"*Ah*, we should focus on this a bit more. How many times do I have to tell you? This is where you'll be fighting. I came here just to make sure, but… *ah*… Seriously… *ah*…" I ordered.

- W-What are you so unsatisfied about?

"Mr. Ballitos. Where's the location of your intense battle with the lowly humans?" I asked.

- T-The food storage.

"Do you really think that I placed you there for no reason? The atmosphere is important, and I'm sure you know that as well. If you understood your character, then you wouldn't have destroyed this place like this. I don't want to say this myself, but you're a scummy demon who enjoys eating human meat," I explained.

- H-Human meat doesn't taste good…

"I'm not telling you to *actually* eat it. I'm human, so I won't tell you to do something that'll make me feel uncomfortable as well. Just hang a few unidentifiable chunks of meat. We brought a lot of magic beast meat. Anyway, the people who'll come here will think that those chunks of meat are human meat. And please decorate the place with cooking tools and fill the iron pots with random spoiled dishes," I ordered.

- O-Okay.

"If you're low on stamina, recover by eating the meat here because that's your gimmick. I've already told you many times. You have to eat something so that the humans will be more afraid of you," I continued.

- I-I'm sorry, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

"There's a reason I'm telling you this. I'm sure you don't like hearing this from a mere human, but I'm saying all of this for your sake, Mr. Ballitos. Really," I added.

- How could I doubt you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young? I, Ballitos, know very well that you've been working harder than anyone for the 27th Legion and that you're doing this for me.

"*Whooo*, this isn't the time to feel relieved just yet, Mr. Ballitos. I'm sure you already know, but recently, Mr. Ulcarox…"

- T-That's…

"Just because you got the role doesn't mean it ends there. You all know this—*Whoo*. I am done saying my piece," I said.

- We'll do our best.

"I'll come back in three hours. If I don't see any improvements by then, I'm sure Belial will be really disappointed," I told him.

- Okay.

"And the entrance to this place was a little too clean, so please make it a bit messy. I feel like the tense atmosphere that was here before has disappeared. I understand that you like cleanliness, but please be a bit more devoted to your role. What kind of human would be scared of a demon who enjoys cleaning?" I asked.

- Understood.

The situation went like that…

'Ha, I think my guys are going to be here soon, and he's still not ready.'

I thought it would take them about ten days, but there was something wrong.

'What kind of drug are they on…?'

I didn't know exactly what was going on, but there were things I could tell just from

looking at them from afar. The troops had gathered at an unimaginable speed, and it seemed like the supplies had been prepared ages ago.

I expected the Federation to interrupt in the middle of it, but Gellahan and Jamila had to have decided to jump onto the bandwagon because they were getting along with the existing troops.

The Republic was really passionate about this as well. In addition, a skilled scouting party had even started gathering information within the Federation.

For the sake of smooth progression, the demon troops started spreading some information around, and the way the scouting party was picking up that information made me wonder if the continent's previous status was just an illusion.

The way they moved naturally and in harmony made me think that they had been training for their role for decades.

Of course, the fact that mankind had unified faster than I thought made me happy, but on the other hand, I was worried because haste was bound to make waste. Everyone had gathered to fight together, but there were many scandals in the process.

I felt awkward because I was sure that everyone's relationship with each other would become a bit strange.

Of course, my current situation was more than just awkward.

'I still have some time left… '

The big cities that Belial had claimed as his own territory were enveloped in darkness. I had to use my holy power to navigate through the area.

The Union had to conquer all the demon bases in between the big cities, so I was sure that they still hadn't reached Amera. Therefore, only mid-ranked demons and mid-bosses had been dispatched so far.

One of the objectives of the Federation's recapture plan was to conquer the areas one by one and clear the fog of war on the map. We also gave them information about how the 27th Legion's presence was weak in locations that weren't within Belial's territory.

Therefore, unless the strategy team of the Continental Union was filled with nothing but idiots, they should be able to conquer those locations soon.

'The preparations have to be perfect.'

I was getting anxious, which was unlike me. However, there was a lot on the line, so it was only natural for me to feel pressured.

I started walking while thinking about many things.

When I saw Rimoura, I instantly felt a bit better. She was one of the Four Heavenly Kings overseeing Amera. She hadn't abandoned her tentacles, which had long become part of her identity. She also had a complete understanding of her character.

In other words, she was basically flawless.

- What do you think…

"I have nothing else to say to you, Miss Rimoura. You're amazing. I could have never imagined that you're capable of covering an entire region with your tentacles… It gives a grotesque feeling, and there's a good amount of terror in the air as well… I'm sure a weak-hearted human will cower in fear the moment they enter this place," I replied.

- No, I still lack many things. I haven't looked into the detailed parts yet… Could you tell me how much time I have left?

"At most, we have about four days… Two days if we hurry things up. The overall rehearsal will probably start the day before. *Hm*. if you don't mind, could you tell me exactly what your role is again, Miss Rimoura?" I requested.

- I have full knowledge about my role, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Basically, I'm going to suck out the mana from the humans in Amera as well as from you to oversee the demons of the army, am I right?

"That's right. I was worried for nothing," I answered.

- I understand that you're worried. Anyway, I like the role you've assigned me because it goes well with my lovely tentacles. I'd like to take this chance to thank you for creating this new character for me, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

“It’s my job to give a talented actor a good role, so there’s no need to thank me for it. *Haha*, I know I said this before, but your role in this plan is more important than any other role because if the food storage—where the humans are stored is liberated—then it’ll be difficult to summon more demons. Basically, this is the beginning and the end of this plan,” I told her.

- The burden of my role is heavy, and I’m really grateful that you’ve given me this opportunity. If this works out well, I’d like to create a power that will allow me to absorb mana using my tentacles. I’m not sure if I’ll be able to make that big of an achievement, though.

“*Hahaha*. That power does fit you well,” I laughed.

- By the way, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Mr. Donovan doesn’t seem like he has been doing much. Has he been uncooperative? If that’s the case…

“*Ah*, that’s not true. It’s because he hasn’t been assigned a region yet,” I replied.

- What? How come…

“Mr. Donovan is playing a defensive role, so there’s no need for him to make preparations. *Hm*, I haven’t told this to anyone else, but Mr. Donovan will directly attack the joint training hall where the humans are gathered,” I answered.

- *Ah*…

“Mr. Donovan will buy us time, and he’ll have the greatest impact on the first battle,” I continued.

- He does fit the role, but personally, I’m kind of worried. He’s not a bad person, but his nature is different from ours. Honestly, I’m pretty surprised that he agreed to join this project since he’s usually not the type to enjoy things like this.

“*Hahaha*. I thought the same thing, but Belial said it should be fine to believe Mr. Donovan at least once since he has been working hard for the legion,” I said.

- Then does that mean the other regions are prepared?

“The characters themselves are still a bit unrefined, but I believe the preparations are complete, and the overall picture is done as well. However, there are still a lot of

things that require work…" I replied.

- If there's something I can help you with…

"It's fine. I just want you to focus on your role, Miss Rimoura. There's no need for you to worry about other things since you're the leading character of this project…" I answered.

- You're embarrassing me.

"You got this role yourself, so have a bit more pride in that," I told her.

Hard workers would be acknowledged in this project, and Rimoura knew that as well. I wasn't anxious anymore. I was happy to see Rimoura's progress, but my happiness only lasted for three hours before it was completely destroyed.

- Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

"Yes?"

- The… army of humans is approaching Belial's territory. W-What should we do?

"What?"

'Why are they moving so fast? Shit.'

Their speed was beyond my calculations.

'How are they so fast, and since when did they start cooperating with each other?'

CHAPTER 491
A DEMON MUST ACT LIKE A DEMON TO BE A DEMON (3)

I had to hurry up.

'Are they really on drugs?'

I was supposed to be happy because of the Continental Union's growth, but I wasn't happy at all. It felt like people were coming over to my place for a housewarming party, even though I was still in the middle of cleaning the place up.

Fortunately, it would take them some time to reach Amera. However, I was becoming desperate because they basically skipped conquering the mini-dungeons and were charging straight ahead.

'Have they gone crazy or something… '

We were dropping hints, but the Continental Union shouldn't have enough information to carry out an actual plan to conquer Belial's territory.

The only information they had was the rough location of each base and the existence of a few of the Four Heavenly Demon Kings—Ballitos, the human-eating demon, and Rimoura, the mana sucker of Amera and was the one making sure that the demons wouldn't get recalled to hell.

We also gave them a few tips. Of course, we didn't mention Donovan and Carpediac so that they would become a bit cautious.

'Are they planning on gathering information while attacking the outskirts? They sure are moving quickly, but there has to be a limit to it. Did they even prepare things properly?'

I wasn't sure what the enemy leaders had in mind, but I knew that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't the one who did all this. He wasn't the type to do something like this. A

conquest this dangerous meant that Kim Hyun-Sung would prioritize safety above all else.

I couldn't help but think that Cha Hee-Ra was the leader of the Continental Union's conquest.

It was also possible that the irritable Father Basel had kicked up a fuss, but I was leaning more toward the possibility that the Red Mercenary Guild was leading the conquest.

Of course, it was also possible that they were pressuring us to observe our reactions.

Unfortunately, my assumption was quickly destroyed.

- The 43rd base has fallen.

"What?"

'I thought they gathered enough personnel there, so why did it fall?'

- We found out that the 41st base is currently in battle. The 41st base hasn't suffered any substantial damage just yet, but priests' holy power is diminishing Belial's territory. Our mid-ranked demons are having trouble against Benigoa's disgusting holy power.

'I really think they're on drugs.'

- The 42nd base's predicament is the same. It seems that those pesky humans are really angry. Things are becoming interesting; it's fun.

'It's not fun at all, you bastard.'

I was shocked by the revelation. Meanwhile, the nearby demons were looking at me, and they seemed happy about the commotion. I was sure that they still hadn't realized that the turn of events was bad and that I was in a desperate situation.

I thought things would go smoothly, so I didn't think that it would be this bad from the start.

'Ah, maybe I shouldn't have taken charge. I shouldn't have agreed to do it… '

The directors, supervisors, and project managers would receive praise whenever things were going well, but once things started going south, they would become responsible for everything.

Right now, Belial was complimenting me. However, I was sure that his compliments would vanish once he realized that things were going south.

I was really worried because he was a scummy demon who was trying to get rid of the demons that had been supporting him and were loyal to him for thousands of years.

Fortunately, the current situation wasn't that bad.

- It's starting. *Hahaha*. I'm really looking forward to this, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

"*Ha… haha*." I chuckled.

- Is this one of the scenarios you had in mind? I can't believe you expected the humans to attack before we dispatched enough troops. As expected…

"Well, it's safe to say that," I said.

- But I feel like our troops fell a little bit too easily. I think it would've been better if we had dispatched more soldiers to the bases. It's too late to send reinforcements now. At this rate, we will have to surrender three bases without getting any proper results.

- *Hahaha*, don't worry so much. I'm sure Mr. Lee Ki-Young has other plans.

'I don't, you bastards.'

My mouth started talking, and the way I started talking was almost like an instinct.

"*Haha*. You need to give them a bit of hope so that the despair they'll feel later is more effective. My heart is already pounding at the thought of making those humans suffer while they're still drunk on their victory. Don't you agree?" I asked.

- I see. *Hahaha*. Does that mean the 41st and 43rd bases were cards you were going to throw away from the start? I completely fell for it, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. You're amazing! Simply amazing!

Of course, it wasn't the case. It wasn't *supposed* to just throw them away, and they weren't supposed to fall that easily. Honestly, I was kind of disappointed with their performance.

Anyway, I finally noticed what the Continental Union was trying to do. The 41st, 42nd, and 43rd bases were in strategic positions, so it was natural that they had decided to conquer them first.

I was sure that they would use those bases as forward operating bases to ensure the safety of the supply routes. In other words, they would be able to gather information more easily with those bases.

The demons weren't really concerned about those bases because they would simply return to hell once they had done their jobs. In their eyes, they would eventually give up those bases, so they weren't really concerned about them.

However, it was unfortunate that the only way they could think of gathering merits was through fierce battles.

Anyway, it wouldn't be strange if the Continental Union found someone else to take on Lee Ki-Young's role, and it made sense considering the Continental Union's actions so far.

'Ship Lee Ki-Young is sinking! There are issues with the forward defenses.'

'The answer is a set piece, and we got unlucky with the first encounter.'

I suddenly recalled a news article criticizing the soccer coach of an obscure country.

"I'm sure they're going to build a large castle wall using magic and use the bases they had conquered as forward operating bases because of their strategic locations. They'll be using those bases from now on in their quest to conquer the Federation. They lack information, so they're definitely thinking about gathering as much information as possible," I explained.

- In that case…

"We need to dispatch Mr. Donovan," I replied.

- *Ah*…

“It’s only a matter of time before the humans decide to scatter,” I said.

- As expected…

‘I managed to come up with an excuse.’

I nodded to myself.

All of a sudden, the nearby demons kneeled.

I was confused, but my body reacted first before my thoughts.

My knees instinctively kneeled at the possible appearance of an important figure.

After getting into the same position as the other demons, I heard a very familiar voice.

- Is everything going well?

‘Belial. Shit… ’

For some reason, it felt like it had been a while since I saw the ruler of the 27th Legion.

‘Why did he come here all of a sudden?’

- Welcome, Belial.

- Welcome Belial, the ruler of many demons.

“Welcome, Great Lord of Hell Belial, the supreme being and the demon revered by all mortals. You look very dignified today as well,” I greeted.

- Forget the flattery. I didn’t come here for that. I heard the news, disgusting human.

“Excuse me?”

- The 41st, 42nd, and 43rd bases were destroyed before we could bring in results.

‘Shit… ’

“They were bases we were going to lose, anyway. Things are working well, so please don’t worry, Belial,” I replied.

- I’m not here to blame you, so don’t worry. It’s actually the opposite. All of this is part of your sickening plan, anyway. I’m not that dumb to get worked up over something like this. You’ve been working hard, so I just came here to praise you for that. It’s happening a little faster than I thought, but this is the first step for the 27th Legion.

‘So why are you treating me like your co-worker?’

“That’s true, but…”

- A big part of it was because I didn’t like the fact that you—the future of the 27th Legion—had decided to go out without making an announcement.

“You mean…”

- Be quiet and follow me.

‘Shit. It’d be nice if he didn’t keep putting things on the line for me. Stop it.’

The bigger of a deal this situation became, the more worried I was about the possible failure of the project. I walked as calmly as possible, but my heart was filled with anxiety.

The sudden increase in the burden on my shoulders made me want to run away.

Belial was all smiles as well, and he even seemed kind of excited.

My lips dried up when I thought about how the failure of this project would turn all of Belial’s excitement into fury.

- Congratulations, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

- It seems like Belial really cares about you, Mr. Lee Ki-Young.

I was sure that the demons next to me had no idea of my feelings because they gave me a thumbs up while congratulating me. I followed Belial while focusing my eyes on his back because I didn’t want to respond to the other demons.

Eventually, I saw the entire 27th Legion in a line.

- *Roooooooooooar!!!*

'I had a feeling that this was going to happen. Shit… '

The entire 27th Legion was there, so it meant that the high priests were there as well. It was definitely a sight to behold, but it was ridiculous in the current situation. They were applauding with sincere looks on their faces, so I couldn't help but think that they were actually congratulating me on the start of the project.

Rimoura and Lonovera were there.

Even Donovan was clapping while smiling warmly…

'Stop it! You bastards. There's no need for all this…!'

They weren't wearing their usual outfit, so it seemed like they were ready to fight. Donovan was covered in armor from head to toe, while Lonovera was holding a spear and a shield.

The other demons wore similar outfits.

When they cheered at once, the sound they produced was so loud that my ears started ringing, and my heart pounded furiously against my chest.

Belial looked at me with satisfaction, and he looked like he was telling me to look at this view. This was the first time I got scared of his hand gesture that was signaling me to go up the stage and say a word or two. I wasn't scared of the stage itself, but it was hard for me to say anything because of our current situation.

"I'm okay, Belial. The 27th Legion is going to war, so I'm sure it'll be better if you say something instead of me," I suggested.

- That's not true, disgusting human. No, I think it's best if I call you Lee Ki-Young from now on. You prepared all these, not me. I'm not cruel enough to take all credit.

'You can take the credit if you want to… '

- Can you see it? The scene in front of you can only be seen by the leader of the 27th

Legion.

'So what, damn it… '

- However, this scene is only a small part of what you're going to see.

"*Ah*, okay…"

- You will have all this one day. What do you think? Do you like it?

"I'm sorry to tell you this, but i-it's a bit burdensome. However, this ignorant mortal is honored that you care so much about me, Belial," I replied.

- I know that you're not being sincere.

'I am being sincere.'

- Stand up there and let the legion know your voice and who you are.

'Shit.'

There was no escape.

I felt like a politician whose picture was being taken before signing an agreement. Belial grabbed my shoulder as well, and the entire legion roared at the sight. In other words, it was impossible to escape from this predicament.

Naturally, I started walking up the stage because the slow-witted Belial pushed me toward the stage with a warm, motherly smile on his lips.

The hall instantly became quiet.

In the end, I had no choice but to say something to them.

- It is my honor to meet you all like this—my dear comrades!

It felt like we were about to fight back.

CHAPTER 492
A DEMON MUST ACT LIKE A DEMON TO BE A DEMON (4)

I obviously didn't want to say a lot. For some reason, the masked scum Jin Cheong's final words echoed in my mind. Unfortunately, I couldn't allow his words to come true. It would have been different if I weren't on the stage, but I was already on the stage, so I might as well go all out.

Belial had created this stage for me, so I had to show that I was honored at the very least. I was sure there was a reason that the Demon of Lies and Instigation created this stage for me, and it was definitely because…

'He wants something.'

It was important to boost the morale of the demon army, but right now, I had to do what Belial was expecting me to do.

- Hello. Let me introduce myself again. I'm the supervisor of this project, your eternal ally and friend, Lee Ki-Young. It hasn't been that long since we met, but I have been granted the position of the 27th Legion's external advisor. Therefore, I would like to thank you all for being here despite the fact that I'm an outsider.

- *Roooooooooooar!!!*

Thankfully, the mood wasn't bad.

- We have a huge task ahead of us, and it's a huge and honorable task. It will be the turning point of the 27th Legion's development, and it's a great opportunity to take a great leap forward. I'm sure many of you are in doubt…

- Why do we need to go this far? Why must we do annoying things like this and put our lives on the line for this project? It seems absurd to some of you, and you are probably wondering why we have to exhaust ourselves for this task.

- *Roooooooooooar!!!*

The majority of them were cheering without any thought, but someone was looking at me with satisfaction. It was none other than Belial. If he wasn't busy staring at me in satisfaction, then I was sure that he would have nodded and exclaimed in agreement.

Meanwhile, Donovan was clapping right now, but his expression was indifferent. I could understand his feelings. I was sure that all this looked childish to him.

- There must be a cause to have an effect. There must be a reason why we have to act this way, and I am about to tell you all about the reason so that you can go about this project a bit more passionately. Of course, it's illogical for a lowly mortal like me to explain this to high and mighty demons of hell, but because I'm a human, there are things that only I have noticed. Sometimes, one can see important things from down below, everyone!

- Yes! You're right!

- The 27th Legion has experienced many changes recently. The legion climbed 41 ranks, and out of the 72 legions, you were able to take the 27th spot. I'm sure everyone already knows, but the army is currently in a crucial period. The 27th Legion's actions will dictate whether it will rise up in the ranks or fall down. Belial may have entrusted this project to a mere mortal like me out of desperation. And that is why! That is why I only have one thing to say—a demon must act like a demon to be a demon.

- A demon… must act like a demon to be a demon.

- Yes, that's right! A demon must act like a demon to be a demon. What does it mean to act like a demon? Have you ever thought about that?

-…

- This is what I think. Slaughtering humans and butchering them like pigs isn't how a demon should act. Bringing about a natural disaster to make humans suffer isn't how a demon should act. If demons are defined by destruction and violence, then what makes you different from monsters?

-…

- The actions I mentioned just now! Stupid monsters can do them as well! Simple destruction, violence, and massacre are things incompetent humans can do as well! Monsters incapable of speaking or thinking often use those methods to instill fear in others, and it's not a method that honorable demons like you should use. So what should you do? What should we do to become a mature demon? What can we do to differentiate ourselves from the ones who aren't as advanced as us?

No one answered. Their lips were moving, but no one said anything. It was fine because I wasn't really expecting an answer.

- The answer is obvious. We must take care of them. We must be careful so that they won't go extinct, and we must watch over them so that they'll develop. However, we should not treat them sincerely.

-…

- There's a popular saying on the continent. If you want to help a vagrant, giving them gold coins isn't the correct way to do so. You must teach them how to make money. This lowly mortal can guarantee that this incident isn't that different. We must not instill fear in them. Instead, we should teach them to feel fear on their own!

-…

- The society of humans is ever-changing, so this is the only way the 27th Legion can rise up the ranks. Don't forcefully instill fear in them. Let them draw their own conclusions, and let them realize the greatness of the 27th Legion on their own! You should not annihilate them! Make sure that they will pass down your legends for generations.

-…

- The fear of death is ephemeral, but the fear you will instill through your legends will last generations. The continent does not lack people who have been mistreated by society, and once they've made the decision to avenge themselves, they will remember your legends and summon you! Parents will use your legends to scare their children, and children will not be able to sleep properly because they're afraid of you! Those who manage to survive the upcoming war will live their lives in a nightmare, and it won't just be the humans! Even the other races will remember you!

- *Woo…*

- Manage their fears, and don't lower yourselves! Ensure that sure you're above them. Maintain the equilibrium, and applaud whenever they improve. The group of humans—the actions of the scummy humans is something you should mock while looking down on them. We must make them realize that we're a superior species and that we're better than them!

- *Roooooooooooar!!*

- From now on, all of you will be remembered as the scourge of the continent and its eternal nightmare!

- *Roooooooooooooooar!!!*

- This continent and the intelligent creatures here—even the dumb Benigoa and the cold-hearted Elune! They will remember you! Demons must act like a demon to be a demon! You're not monsters. You're different from the idiotic hard-liner demons in hell. You guys are demons who will trick humans by lying and instigating! You will manage and mock them while looking down on them from above! Demons must act like a demon to be a demon!

- Demons must act like a demon to be a demon!

- Demons must act like a demon to be a demon!

'Wow, the atmosphere is nice.'

I knew I would receive support from the soft-liners, but I was honestly getting kind of tired of it. It wasn't as formal as the beginning. In addition, all but a few of the demons who were going to get killed were cheering with all their might.

'Wow… '

I was dumbfounded. The level of excitement was similar to the time when I stood on the podium at the Sacred Democratic Country and shouted Benigoa's name. Even the few demons that I had labeled as hardliners were nodding in agreement. Belial was the same. He was applauding as if he was really satisfied, which caused me to smile.

'He might even overlook my mistake.'

I had just essentially unified the members of the 27th Legion present here, which

was a great task. It wasn't much, but we were one step closer to true unification. Just a few minutes ago, I wanted to get out of this place as fast as possible, but at this point, I was getting hyped as well.

- Lee Ki-Young is the 27th legion's wind of change!

- For Lee Ki-Young!

- Look at that disgusting soul! How could that soul belong to a human!

- We'll wait for the day you return to hell—external Advisor!

The exciting atmosphere hyped me up.

When I cleared my throat, the room quickly became quiet.

- I'm sure all of you are aware, but a few hours ago, the stupid humans stepped on Belial's territory. Those pesky humans captured the 41st, 42nd, and 43rd bases. They also built a wall, and they're going to use those bases as their forward operating bases to conquer Amera. They're approaching while sprinkling the dirty light of Benigoa. Yes, it has begun! The beginning has begun!

-…

- From when we have just conceptualized the project up until today, I have never seen you rest or do other things.

-…

- The sound of the wind and the dreary rain has been hitting the windows of my office, and it was indeed the calm before the storm. I'm sure some of the demons who are watching the current situation from hell are ridiculing this project. I'm sure they're saying that this project is meaningless.

-…

- The result will tell us who was right all along.

-…

- The result will tell us who was foolish all along!

-…

- And let's show them. Let's prove that we haven't wasted even a second of our time here, my dear companions.

- *Roooooooooooooar!!!*

-Waaaaaaar! We're going to war!

The loud roars felt like they would tear my eardrums apart. I didn't say anything, but the army started moving on its own. Donovan smiled. He had to have realized that it was his turn. There were things that didn't require any words to understand.

I glanced at Belial, and he started talking to the army.

- I want Donovan of the Four Heavenly Kings to lead the army and show them the meaning of true fear.

- I have received your order.

It was a bit absurd, but Belial walked in a dignified manner toward me.

I nodded without realizing it, and Belial tapped my shoulder as if to show me that he was happy.

'Not bad. The situation is actually pretty good.'

I felt like I had managed to fix the wrong step I had taken. The best-case scenario was Donovan receiving a reasonable amount of aggro and retiring at the appropriate time.

I was sure that quite a few people would die at Donovan's hands because of his violent tendencies, but those useless Federation bastards were the primary targets of this plan, so…

'I don't need to worry about that.'

The situation would end once our lovely regressor confronted the exhausted

Donovan, and we should be able to buy enough time with that. It would be a win-win situation for everyone, including me and Belial.

The scenario I imagined was so beautiful that I couldn't help but smile just thinking about it.

However, I noticed that something was wrong eight hours later.

'Why are you guys there with Hyun-Sung? Capture Donovan!'

Donovan attacked the Continental Union's base with the 27th Legion, and I saw the Blue Guild and the Four Nation Alliance coming out of the base.

Donovan's passing was almost perfect.

'Kim Hyun-Sung, you weren't this kind of person.'

I had no idea what was going on, but this was what it looked like in my eyes—Kim Hyun-Sung decided to abandon the Federation.

'This isn't you… '

They used Gellahan of Hellfire and Jamila as bait, and they immediately started moving toward Amera.

CHAPTER 493
A TWIST AFTER TWIST AFTER TWIST (1)

'What's going on?'

I couldn't believe my eyes. It was so shocking that I still couldn't believe it despite seeing it for myself inside the situation room that Belial had prepared for me. I was doubting myself. I looked at the magic hologram again, but the scene was still the same. Donovan charged at the wall like a crazy dog with rabies. He was currently suffering a stat penalty, but he was still a Semi-Mythic being.

The humans on the wall shot magic and arrows out of fear, which kickstarted the siege warfare. If the humans joined forces, I was certain they would be able to defeat Donovan.

I thought the reinforcements from the Four Nation Alliance and the Republic would arrive on time before more damage was done to the Federation forces.

It would be a beautiful sight to behold seeing Kim Hyun-Sung cutting Donovan's head off once the latter was exhausted after destroying the wall. I was a hundred percent sure that it would happen.

However, I couldn't find Kim Hyun-Sung anywhere using the magic hologram. What actually caught my attention was the Sacred Democratic Country's main force abandoning the base and heading deeper into Belial's territory toward Amera.

While Donovan was running rampant at the 41st base, the main force broke through the 43rd base's siege warfare. At first, I thought he had just deliberately placed the soldiers behind him as bait, but that wasn't the case.

He had really decided to abandon the Federation.

'What's with him all of a sudden?'

I thought of a few possibilities, but I couldn't come up with any reason for Kim Hyun-Sung to use the Federation as a sacrifice. Based on his personality, I thought he

wouldn't abandon people to die, especially when it could implicate foreign affairs.

Kim Hyung-Sung wasn't interested in politics, but I was sure that he knew how much blame he would receive throughout the continent, and he definitely knew the scale of conflict such a decision would bring.

I could have never imagined that the regressor who was trying to unify mankind would create such a large-scale conflict.

'Did he not think of an escape route? What is he going to do if he gets sandwiched by Donovan?'

He was basically advancing with no retreat. He didn't care about anything; he only cared about arriving in time. The troop formation and camp were perfect, but the existence of an army whose sole purpose was to break through enemy lines was odd.

'There really is no retreat… '

I realized right there and then that my plan had gone to the dogs. I thought that Kim Hyun-Sung would secure a base, take over a region, and then perform enough reconnaissance until they were well-equipped with enough information to wage war.

I also thought of the possibility of guerilla warfare using those forward operating bases, but I was mistaken all along. Kim Hyun-Sung's plan was to arrive at Amera as soon as possible while carrying the minimum amount of supplies.

It wasn't even a strategy because he was just pushing through enemy lines without much thought. It seemed like he didn't even consider the possibility that he would run out of supplies and get captured by the enemies. I couldn't understand why Lee Ji-Hye even agreed to this crazy *strategy.*

Of course, I couldn't help but smile when I thought that perhaps the reason he was running rampant was that a comrade of his was suffering at the hands of the demons.

However, I felt anxious as well.

'How do I deal with this?'

Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't actually kill every demon running toward him.

If this were an actual war, the demons would have gathered and created a shield to block Kim Hyun-Sung's spear. Afterward, they would surround and kill him.

However, I couldn't let my precious party members die.

I had told the demons about the description of the people who shouldn't die no matter what, so the demons were naturally wary about blocking Kim Hyun-Sung's spear.

'Will they be able to increase their worth without doing that?'

There were gift boxes everywhere, but Kim Hyun-Sung charged like a burning bus charging toward the Blue House.

I was sure they had a plan because the heroes of the Republic and the troops of the other nations were participating in the event we had prepared, but I wasn't satisfied with that.

'Why is Donovan… '

- You dirty, pesky humans.

- *Ahhhhhhhhh!* R-Run… *Ruuuuuuuun!*

- The Sacred Democratic Country has abandoned us. The Continental Union has abandoned us. Shit… Shit!

- You Republican bastards! The heavens won't forgive you!

- Don't retreat. Don't retreat! Don't let them come up here! Stop them! Don't give up! Resist until the end! We're defending the wall, so we still have the advantage!

- God won't forgive you, you bastards!

- Shoot! Shoooooot!

- R-Retreat…!

It was absurd, but the Federation soldiers were already running around.

However, it was clear that they knew their roles well because they were attacking within the limits of their roles.

I wasn't sure if he was just unlucky, but I saw Gellahan of Hellfire being torn apart by Donovan.

- You call this fire hellfire?

- *Aaaaahhh!* S-Save me…! Save…

- How dare a maggot like you call yourself Hellfire when you haven't had a taste of true Hellfire! You're really disgusting.

I also saw Jamila writhing in pain.

- Please, please save me. Please. Please…!

They were going to die from the start, but I had to say goodbye to them at the very least since we did spend quite a lot of time together. I would have preferred to give them at least a scar before they were killed, but it seemed that I wouldn't be able to do that.

They died an awful death despite their Epic and Legendary jobs.

'There really is no hope for the Federation… '

The giant scar on the continent was worthy of a nod, but…

'I can't let it end like this.'

At this rate, this part would be considered a failure. Donovan was working hard to get results, but he wasn't doing any acting at all. He was just doing what a hard-liner would do.

How could he improve his worth when he killed those humans before instilling fear in them? His method was impactful, so it wasn't that bad, but I still got nervous because he was killing every person he saw.

'Crazy bastard… That's why I told him not to overdo it. Damn it.'

Thankfully, it seemed like he hadn't forgotten his mission because he showed an opening and cornered the humans into Belial Land. However, the number of cornered humans was smaller than I had envisioned.

It was like a rollercoaster with fifty seats, but only twenty people were riding it.

'What should I do?'

The ones who had to go to heaven after fighting for a while were trolling, and Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't playing along with the demons.

'How do we kill Donovan and stop those guys?'

I thought hard and long about it, but I couldn't find the answer.

'Should I change sides?'

For a moment, I thought about taking the side of mankind and killing the demons, but it was an unlikely endeavor. I could have done it if Belial were Benigoa.

Unfortunately, I wasn't courageous enough to backstab Belial.

In addition, the demons would be my insurance in two thousand years, so I obviously had to maintain a good relationship with them.

Cutting ties with them just because things weren't working out was a dumb move that would create more problems down the road.

'I have to maintain a good relationship with Belial until the end… '

We basically shared a common destiny.

My frustration had to have unknowingly leaked because a demon in the situation room with me started talking.

- Are you okay, Mr. Lee Ki-Young? You don't look so good.

"*Ah*, I'm fine. The food I ate is making me feel a bit queasy. Anyway, it seems like everything is going according to plan. Not bad," I replied.

- As expected…

“If it continues like this, I believe the project will end successfully. *Ah*, if you find anything unusual, please tell me right away,” I requested.

- *Oh,* there is something.

“What?”

- The enemy force that came out of the 43rd base is channeling a spell. They have been doing it for quite a while now…

‘So why did you just tell me that?’

“S-Show it on the screen,” I said.

- Okay.

The main force of the Sacred Democratic Country that had been running like wild animals had stopped at some point.

“Can’t they go closer to them?” I asked.

- There’s a human with keen senses among them… If the familiar spirit goes any closer, that human will probably notice them. This is the limit.

“Zoom in a bit,” I ordered.

- Sure.

Jung Ha-Yan was the one channeling the spell. I wasn’t sure what spell it was, but the size of the pulsating mana made it obvious that it was extremely powerful.

I was worried that she would cast that spell and send it flying here, but…

‘There’s no way she’ll do something like that… ’

I was sure that she wouldn’t cast Meteor because she knew that I was in Amera. In addition, a powerful spell alone wouldn’t be able to guarantee victory in this war.

We had enough defenses to withstand Semi-Mythic spells, so there shouldn't be an issue, even if we were to take the brunt of that spell.

I thought that perhaps she was channeling that spell out of desperation, but the looks on everyone's faces made it clear that it wasn't the case.

It had been a while since I saw the party members. The familiar spirit couldn't get closer, so I couldn't make out the fine details, but I could see their haggard faces.

For some reason, Sun Hee-Young was radiating this murderous air, just like the Sun Hee-Young of the Dark World.

Meanwhile, Park Deok-Gu's eyes were swollen.

I also saw Cha Hee-Ra, Kasugano Yuno, and Elena. They didn't look any better than the others.

Cha Hee-Ra looked worse than the others, and I couldn't have imagined that a day would come when she would look that haggard.

However, our lovely regressor, Kim Hyun-Sung, captured my attention.

'Geez, you look thin.'

He looked like he had been crippled. He looked so bad that I actually couldn't find a word to describe him. He looked as if he was really troubled and was regretting everything that had happened recently.

He looked just as troubled as Jung Ha-Yan, who was currently channeling a spell. In addition, he looked like he was going to make the confession of a lifetime once this was over, but that wasn't the only emotion I could make out on his face.

'What… are they trying to do? What's wrong with all of you guys?'

Everyone looked determined, as if they were about to put their lives on the line.

I could understand why they felt that way because they had basically embarked on a mission that was no different from suicide.

However, the determination on their faces wasn't the type of determination one

would have when facing certain death.

In the end, I could only say that they were either saying goodbye to their lives or they simply looked resolute.

I was sure that their determination drove them to channel the spell that Jung Ha-Yan was channeling, and I became curious about just what kind of spell it was that it made them look like they were walking toward the gallows.

To make things worse, Jung Ha-Yan looked nervous, which was unlike her.

'I have to stop her.'

However, it was too late to send reinforcements. Jung Ha-Yan's nervous expression eventually turned gloomy. Priests like Elena and Sun Hee-Young clasped their hands, and even Park Deok-Gu was doing the same thing.

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded to signal that he had decided.

Jung Ha-Yan's mouth moved slightly, casting the spell.

I was about to inform the others to be careful about the incoming meteor, but…

- They're gone.

'I have eyes, too, so I can see it, you bastard… '

The troops disappeared right in front of my eyes.

The only thing that remained was the massive magic circle beneath their feet earlier.

'What the hell is going on? What's wrong with you guys? Seriously?'

I started panicking, but a voice from outside interrupted me.

- Mr. Lee Ki-Young. The enemy's main force h-have arrived at the main attack point. They've arrived at R-Rimoura's nest.

I instantly recognized the spell that Jung Ha-Yan had cast.

‘Teleportation… ’

It was a spell that was only known in theory.

CHAPTER 494
A TWIST AFTER TWIST AFTER TWIST (2)

'Shit… '

I frowned at the unexpected situation.

'Shit, shit, shit…!'

I had to remain calm, so I kept on nodding, but I was inwardly frustrated. I couldn't quite understand what was going on, but one thing was for sure—Jung Ha-Yan had just cast an unprecedented spell, which dealt an effective blow against us.

It was difficult to describe with words, but the spell's effect made me laugh uncontrollably.

'Teleportation?'

I had many different spells here, but I had never seen anything like that. In the first place, the idea of opening a rift into space and opening another rift in another location to appear in that particular location didn't make sense.

Even the modern world still hadn't succeeded in doing something like that, so this continent shouldn't have been any different. In other words, Jung Ha-Yan had succeeded in doing something that existed only in dreams until now.

I had a mage-related job, but I couldn't do anything other than remain silent because comprehending the theory behind it would be like constructing the Sage's Stone in my case.

'A genius; she's a genius. I knew she was a genius, but… '

She was on a different level.

The bearish market sentiment for Jung Ha-Yan Coin was about to become bullish.

'It's a good thing I toughed it out… '

Of course, I was sure that there was some kind of danger involved in casting that spell. I wasn't exactly aware of the danger, but right now, I wouldn't consider it a perfect spell.

In other words, Jung Ha-Yan had cast that spell, knowing that there would only be two outcomes for them.

The first outcome was overestimating the cast range of the spell.

'There has to be a limit to its cast range… '

I had discovered the second outcome because the expressions of the members of the detachment were disturbing. They had looked like they were about to put their lives on the line.

'Perhaps there's a chance that they'll get lost in the rift of dimensions, or they'll get ripped apart if the transportation fails. It's possible in theory, but she had decided on using it without any tests… '

Jung Ha-Yan could have died if things had gone wrong. I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung knew Jung Ha-Yan to the extent that he might have known that she was capable of casting that spell.

However, the remaining members of the detachment were nothing more than lab rats.

Anyway, the more pressing issue here was that Jung Ha-Yan had probably never tested the spell first before using it in action because of its massive mana consumption. I was captured, so she had probably tried her best to gather as much mana as she could to cast it even once, so in other words…

'I'm sure she doesn't have enough mana to cast that again.'

At last, I could finally see the overall situation. Aside from the detachment that decided to invade Rimoura's nest, some of the detachments were bait, while the other detachments were…

'They're definitely securing an escape route.'

Aside from the 41st, 42nd, and 43rd base, which was currently under Donovan's siege, the remaining bases would be their escape route. It became clear after seeing the other detachments attack those bases.

It also made sense because they would have to fight Donovan's troops while they were retreating. It seemed like they were attacking haphazardly without much thought, but their strategy was actually as elaborate as a spider's web, which amazed me.

It looked bold and extreme, but they were moving in a way that covered all bases, which made me realize that this was…

'This was definitely Ji-Hye noona's work… '

Of course, if Lee Ji-Hye were the only one in charge of the strategy creation, then she would have come up with a safer method. However, there was a high chance that Cha Hee-Ra had influenced her.

Unfortunately, I was more scared than surprised when I recalled how talented and powerful the members of Kim Hyun-Sung's detachment were. Of course, I was thankful that they cared a lot about me, but considering the current situation, I felt frustrated.

The situation room became quiet. The confused demons staring at me bothered me to the extent that I was forced to speak.

- This is…

"It's not perfect, but it's part of my calculation," I said.

- Really?

"Everyone, agitation will cloud your judgment. This is a variable within my calculations, although the possibility of it happening was low. We can definitely handle this turn of events, and there are many different methods to do so as well," I replied.

- I see. As expected from the external advisor. Humans really surprise us every time. I thought you were special since you were able to summon Belial here, but Teleportation… I heard there are a few humans in other dimensions who are capable

of using that, but I could have never imagined that I would one day see it in action with my own eyes.

- They're amazing, but you're amazing as well. Is this really a part of your calculations?

'I haven't calculated anything, you bastards… '

I was sure that not even the genius or the strategist of the century would expect something like this. After all, expectations could only be formed if there were signs, and things were normal until now, so there was no way that I could have predicted all this.

I never thought that Kim Hyun-Sung would decisively abandon the Federation and charge into Amera like this.

I was even more stupefied when Jung Ha-Yan had not only successfully cast Teleport, but she had cast it with precision. I thought that perhaps Jung Ha-Yan's calculations would end up being off, which would make them appear somewhere else.

However, they landed perfectly in front of Rimoura's nest.

I couldn't help but regret spilling clues.

- What should we do?

'Don't ask me, man. I don't know either.'

- I'm sure he has a miraculous method. He's the external advisor, after all. *Haha*.

'I don't have anything like that. I don't, man… '

I could only think of basic countermeasures.

"I think we should call the troops and delay their march as much as possible. Since it'll take some time until Miss Rimoura receives the message, please contact the troops nearest to us. And the closest one to us is…"

'Ballitos… '

“Let’s send a message to Mr. Ballitos as well. Tell him to come to the Nest. Please tell him that we’ll use the food storage another time,” I instructed.

- Yes, sir.

“A-and can we increase the number of high priest demons?” I asked.

- I’m sure it’s possible.

“I’ll leave it up to you,” I said.

- Okay.

The expedition team had just figured out what was going on after following the standard procedure of sending rangers to scout the surroundings while the others prepared their equipment and composed themselves.

Everyone looked determined, and they were even biting their lips to show it.

However, their pallid expressions caught my attention.

I also saw a few people vomiting their guts out.

I knew that Jung Ha-Yan’s Teleport wasn’t perfect, so they had to be experiencing its side effects right now.

Of course, Jung Ha-Yan’s condition attracted most of my attention. Her hair was white again, and she couldn’t walk properly.

‘Geez… ’

My heart cracked when I saw her walking as if she were a hunchback, and she almost collapsed when Park Deok-Gu patted her shoulder lightly.

In response, Jung Ha-Yan nodded at Park Deok-Gu with clenched fists; she seemed happy that she had succeeded.

However, the sight made me feel sad.

Everyone approached and comforted her for a moment aside from Sun Hee-Young,

which bothered me.

At last, the expedition team was about to enter the Rimoura's nest.

'I'm not even surprised anymore.'

- We'll go in.

- Right now?

- Yes. We have arrived, but we don't have the luxury to establish camp and take a break. I'm sure the demons have already found out that we're here. We're going to leave this place as soon as we rescue Sub Guild Master Lee Ki-Young from the demons that are currently maintaining their presence here.

- Is it impossible to figure out his exact location? Actually, is Mr. Lee Ki-Young really here…

- Of course, we can't confirm it with the information that the rangers have gathered so far, but—*whew*. I'm sure the owner of this nest knows more than us. I think Rimoura will be in the back—where the stronger demons are located, but it's also possible that she's in a totally different place. That is why we should also create a search party with some of the troops and investigate the surroundings. Meanwhile, the expedition team will enter the nest. Anyway, we just have to move according to the plan.

- Okay.

- Just follow the plan.

- All right.

Their conversation ended, and the troops charged into the Nest.

'Shit. I think I need to do something. Can Rimoura hold out? Can she do it?'

I honestly couldn't make a decision the expedition team was exhausted as well, and Rimoura wasn't the only one at her Nest. Objectively, the demons in the Nest were more powerful than the expedition team.

'Since Ha-Yan is currently out of commission.'

It made sense that the demons in the Nest were more powerful without Jung Ha-Yan's participation in the expedition team. The turn of events was far from my original plan, and there wasn't really anything I could do to fix all this.

The Battle at Rimoura's Nest was supposed to end in humanity's victory after a desperate struggle. The Continental Union was supposed to arrive here after growing amidst the hardships.

My original plan involved the Continental Union barely winning against the demons in the Nest, and if things didn't end according to my original plan…

'Then, it will be no different from a complete failure.'

It was no different from investing an astronomical amount of money into a movie, but only five hundred thousand people watched, which would make them earn less money than the expected ten million dollars.

In other words, the Continental Union would only feel half of the despair and fear of the demons.

Right now, the best-case scenario was the expedition team failing in their plans and retreating. I could easily deal with the other trivial variables later down the road.

'We can't let things end here.'

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that Donovan was filling those five hundred thousand seats. If this project were to fail, the worst-case scenario involved the hard-liners of the 27th Legion gaining tremendous power and Belial holding Lee Ki-Young responsible.

For the continent, there couldn't be a worse scenario than that.

'I'll have to trust them for now.'

I finally organized my thoughts somehow. The expedition had definitely cornered me, but it wasn't like I was out of cards. While I was imagining happy scenarios to cope, Rimoura finally arrived at the Nest after receiving the message.

I stroked my chin while watching, but…

- Shit! Shit. How dare you! Hurt me! He had complimented me for my hair…!

- Where are you?

- *Aaaaahhh!* Die!!! Dieeeeeeee!!!

As if First Blood, Double Kill, Pentakill, and Dominating weren't enough, the awakened Kim Hyun-Sung was making Rimoura experience his true power and potential. The one-sided beatdown made me run out of the situation room.

'Did you guys take drugs or something? If she dies, I'll die as well, you bastards…!'

I couldn't just stand by and watch.

I had to do something because the situation was becoming worse.

'Shit. What should I do? Damn it… '

I was frustrated, but I continued thinking of ways to resolve the issue. However, the only solution I could think of was forcing the expedition team to retreat. I didn't think that I would be able to make a difference even if I went there. In addition, Rimoura should be capable enough of holding out until Ballitos and his troops arrived.

'Should I act like a hostage? Will that be enough?'

All of a sudden, a pretty decent idea appeared in my mind.

"*Huh?*"

The idea was so good that I came to a halt.

"*Hahaha…*"

It would be kind of forcing it, but the foundation had already been laid out.

"Why didn't I think of this earlier? I should have done it from the beginning," I mumbled.

I couldn't understand why I only thought about being the victim. I was worried because it seemed *really* cliche, but it was still a decent idea. I had to fix a lot of things in the script, but it was an extremely effective cliche often seen in Shonen[1] films.

'This is it…!'

It was sudden, but the protagonist's rival or friends…

"…they tend to become corrupt or tainted," I muttered.

---

1. Boy's comics ☜

CHAPTER 495
BECOME EVIL! (1)

The idea kind of broke my heart, and it was to the point that I had to think deeply about it while I was running mindlessly somewhere. It would simply be acting, but I knew that my acquaintances and friends would be stupefied by it.

They risked their lives to teleport into enemy territory, but there was still no guarantee that they would be able to successfully clear Rimoura's nest.

I remembered their desperate faces, and I couldn't help but feel worried that the shock would be too much for them to endure to the extent that they would retire after retreating.

'I'm sure it won't be that bad… '

I was especially worried about Jung Ha-Yan, but I had to trust Kim Hyun-Sung.

I had to trust that he would take care of her mental health.

'I'm sure it's the same for Park Deok-Gu… '

I was telling myself that everything would be fine, but I knew the feeling of despair, so I had to think twice about my plan.

'What can I do? I don't have any other choice… '

There was also no guarantee that the plan would work, and I was also not sure if I could even buy some time for Rimoura. It was also almost impossible to hold down the furious Kim Hyun-Sung until Ballitos' arrival.

'It's not like Kim Hyun-Sung is the only one there… '

Cha Hee-Ra and Kasugano Yuno of Celia were there. Thankfully, Park Yeon-Joo wasn't there because she was investigating the nearby areas with the rangers, but the expedition team was made up of strong people.

The famous priests from Vatican and Sun Hee-Young were there, along with Elena—whose holy power was basically at the saintess level. In other words, the most famous and most powerful people of the Sacred Democratic Country were there.

I was desperate because Rimoura and her subordinates were part of the 27th Legion's main force, but the expedition team was stronger than them.

If Rimoura died here, then I would die as well.

I wasn't sure if Belial would react negatively to Donovan's death, but there was no way I could let Belial's favorite demon die here. I thought of positive thoughts to cope momentarily, but I knew I had to hurry up because Rimoura was currently under siege.

'I can't let her die here. She's the great Demon Lord Belial's most favorite demon… '

[That's right.]

Shit…

[Looks like things aren't looking so good.]

Damn it.

'That's not true, Belial. This is all part of my plan, so please don't worry about it and just watch.'

[Save the disgusting and nauseating lie. I already have an idea about what's happening right now. You know how important this is, right?]

'Of course, I do. That's why I've been running around like a madman. There's no need for you to step in. I'll take care of everything.'

[It doesn't sound like a bad plan, but can I trust that you won't mess this up? Messing things up is how you lose trust…]

'You mean… '

[Don't worry. I won't do anything unexpected like last time, you disgusting human. I'm not going to destroy your achievements here, and I have no intention of harming

the humans you cherish. As I said before, I care about you, and I'm waiting for the day when you and I get to work together. I simply thought that I had to intervene *slightly*. Don't you agree?]

'Then… what kind of assistance will you provide… '

[A contract.]

'What?'

[It'll be a contract.]

'This lowly mortal doesn't understand what kind of contract you're talking about… Isn't it impossible for me to get into a contract with you from the start?'

[I looked into it, and that doesn't seem to be the case. It would have been impossible if Benigoa and the other gods of the continent weren't currently missing. Anyway, at this point, I think it's best for me to intervene. This time, it'll be a direct contract.]

'That's… '

[I'm not telling you to abandon the things you have received from Benigoa, but…]

'Yes?'

[I want you to give me a share.]

'…'

[Of course, it'll be impossible if the main gods of the continent, including Benigoa, decided to intervene because they can't just watch as you give me a share of you, but the contract shouldn't be an issue this time.]

Now, we were finally talking…

However, I remained silent at the suggestion.

I started thinking that perhaps this was what Belial wanted all along. I wasn't sure if he had been keeping his silence all this while because he was waiting for the right timing or because he was looking for a way to get into a direct contract with me.

I took a deeper dive into it, and I reckoned that it was probably both.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have brought this up right now.

The Alchemist of Light job I received from Benigoa was a unique job that was a part of our contract. She had urged me to fight on the side of the light in exchange for giving me this job, and I had simply accepted her offer.

I hadn't thought about getting into a double contract with Belial, but it was understandable that I had never thought of that angle. After all, black magic and holy power were polar opposites.

If I were to think about this offer positively, then it would be akin to Belial saying that I should establish a contract with him and with Benigoa at the same time.

However, I had no idea what Benigoa would do in response to that, so I thought about the possibility that my contract with Benigoa would break if I were to agree to Belial's suggestion and establish a contract with him as well.

Naturally, once Benigoa recovered from bankruptcy, she would most likely take back the powers that she had bestowed upon me.

In addition, I was also suspicious of the suggestion.

Why did he suggest a double contract?

From Belial's point of view…

'Isn't it more beneficial for him to get rid of Benigoa and then get into a contract with me afterward?'

[That's impossible.]

'…'

[What you're thinking is impossible to do. You're probably doubting why I'm being so nice all of a sudden, and it can't be helped because your situation isn't that great. However, threatening someone or forcing someone into a contract counts as an unfair contract, so it'll most likely cause issues down the road. If I could, I would use this opportunity by offering you an unfair contract, but I can't do that.]

If Belial's words were true, then it meant that contracts in hell were more ethical than contracts in the real world.

[Whether you'll believe me or not is up to you, but you should be able to find the answer if you think about why demons would establish contracts with humans who only wish for useless things like gold and offerings. One should negotiate contract terms rather than force them. Of course, some deception is used during that process, but this contract isn't that kind of contract. I already told you about it before.]

'Of course… '

[I also can't do something like that because of the restrictions she had put on you. She had basically claimed first dibs on you. She's incompetent, but she's skilled in gathering forces. Anyway, do you need any other explanation? If you still doubt me—]

'No, no, Belial. This humble servant's doubts about your bigger picture were merely ephemeral…"

The moment I nodded…

[A new special job has been created because of Belial's interference.]

[Alchemist of Light will be preserved due to external interference.]

[You have obtained the Semi-Mythic job—Dark Plaguelord—as your subclass.]

[An external interference is trying to delete the Semi-Mythic job—Dark Plaguelord.]

[The Semi-Mythic job Dark Plaguelord cannot be deleted due to Belial's interference.]

[You cannot use two jobs at the same time.]

[Your Semi-Mythic special job will be changed due to the interference of Belial.]

[Alchemist of Light has become your subclass.]

[Dark Plaguelord has become your main class.]

'Huh? Huuuuh?!'

[Are you satisfied?]

'The light has abandoned me!'

[You look satisfied.]

'Oh my... I will give you infinite glory, Belial. Hurray, Belial...!'

[You must be aware that I've invested a lot in you.]

Of course, I was aware. I wasn't sure how much merit he had earned so far, but the fact that he could interfere in the system meant that he had received a lot of merit. I felt ashamed for even doubting him.

The great demon ruler Belial wasn't the type to use tricks like Benigoa.

He was a reliable comrade who was working hard with me to make this project a success, and the realization made me feel warm inside.

'I'll succeed even if I have to put my life on the line... '

I couldn't think of anything else other than success.

The light had abandoned me, and I was running toward Rimoura's nest with that thought in mind, but my heart also turned cold when I thought about the upcoming battle.

It was a nigh impossible mission to stop the expedition team from reaching Belial's sanctum, and if I were to go there as the Alchemist of Light, then I was sure that they would beat me up quite easily.

However, Belial's benevolence allowed me to be reborn as Doom Ki-Young, and I could feel that I had gone through a tremendous change.

I was worried that I would lack mana, but I could feel that it wasn't the case. In addition, the overflowing power coursing through my body made me feel as if I could do a hundred push-ups nonstop.

Of course, I still had to figure out the skills of my job, but at least I knew for sure that it was anything but lacking.

When I was close to Rimoura's nest, I patted myself clean and started walking slowly.

I could hear loud noises and explosions from where the battle was happening.

I looked at myself in the mirror, and I looked good enough.

'Wow, I really look like I got corrupted… '

I wasn't sure if it was one of the job's effects, but I looked so pale that I was basically indistinguishable from a corpse. My light blue eyes sent shivers down my spine, and my hair had turned white as well as if I were suffering from mana exhaustion.

I personally didn't like it that much. Anyway, my appearance perfectly depicted the image of a teenager in their rebellious phase. Basically, anyone could tell that I had been corrupted.

Actually, my hair wasn't completely white because it had a light blue hue like my eyes.

'It would be perfect if I had a half mask.'

[You have obtained the legendary-ranked item—Corrupted Prince's Half Mask.]

'Wooow…! Thank you. Thank you…!'

The half-mask would basically become my symbol, and it was also a way for me to remind Kim Hyun-Sung of the masked scum. I had to do this because I wasn't like Benigoa, who would fail even if everything was already prepared for her, and she only had to do her job.

I cleared my throat and entered.

Kim Hyun-Sung was currently swinging his sword at Rimoura.

'It's been a while, Hyun-Sung… Whew, it's nice to see you all… '

I glanced at the furious Rimoura and saw that a few of her tentacles had been severed.

I started to feel desperate at the sight.

'Shit… I think I'm too relaxed.'

I raised my hand at the thought of interfering with Kim Hyun-Sung before he could unleash another attack, but I quickly realized that I didn't have to do that.

He looked up, and our eyes met.

He looked happy at first, but his expression quickly turned blank as if the world around him was falling apart.

He even unknowingly dropped his sword as if he had lost all his strength.

His eyes became filled with tears, and he let his guard down to the extent that he became full of openings.

Kim Hyun-Sung was standing there in a daze, which made him appear as though he wasn't in battle.

'What? Is this… that shocking?'

I knew he would be shocked, but this was a bit too much.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he had lost all his will to fight.

He started speaking, but I couldn't really hear him.

"H-How…"

'What? What's wrong…? this is too easy… '

“Hooow?!” Kim Hyun-Sung yelled. Then, he furiously and effortlessly severed Rimoura’s tentacles that were flying toward him.

CHAPTER 496
BECOME EVIL! (2)

It was really effective. The word *effective* was a bit stereotypical here, but nothing could describe the current situation better than that word.

I braced myself and prepared contingency plans in case he showed a different reaction, but he showed the reaction I had been expecting, which wasted my preparations.

Rimoura stared at me in confusion, but she was quick-witted, so her face soon brightened up.

She quickly realized why I had come here and why I looked like this.

'I don't think she was told beforehand… '

The battle in the nest came to a lull, and the people were staring at me in shock.

"Is that you, hyung-nim?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"O-O-Oppa. *Heuuuung.* Oppaaa…!" Jung Ha-Yan cried out.

"Darling?" Cha Hee-Ra called out.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young…" Elena said.

They looked at me as if they couldn't believe what they were seeing, and the majority of them were confused about how they should react. Elena, Cha Hee-Ra, and Kasugano Yuno instantly knew what was going on, so they looked like they were in despair.

Kim Hyun-Sung was in despair as well.

However, the slow-witted Park Deok-Gu started yelling at me, and he looked so happy that it was a bit ridiculous.

“Y-You’re alive! Hyung-nim is alive. I knew it! Hyung-nim, hurry up and run over here! No, stay there. I’ll go to you. I’ll go to you!”

“…”

“I knew nothing that you’ll be fine, hyung-nim. I expected nothing less. I knew you’d hold out. I-I’ll save you, so just stay there,” Park Deok-Gu continued.

‘Park Deok-Gu, why are you so slow?’

I wasn’t sure if he was denying reality or if he was just slow-witted, but he was screaming while crying.

“Hyung-nim, your little bro is here. The little bro you love the most is here! Can’t you hear me? *Geez*. You’re so pale, hyung-nim. And your hair… What are you guys doing? Let’s hurry and drive out these demons and save hyung-nim. What are you all doing?! Seriously!” he yelled.

“…”

“Are you under a spell or something? Pick up your weapons! What are you guys doing?! Are you okay, Mr. Hyun-Sung? Mages, hurry up and cast your magic! Warriors, hold up your shields! Hold it up! Hyung-nim is right before us! He’s right there! What are you all standing around for?!” he continued.

‘Geez, this bastard is breaking my heart. Seriously. And I’m a bit far away.’

“It’s too late.”

“What do you mean, it’s too late?! Stop talking bullshit and fight, you bastards!” he cursed.

“…”

“Fight! Fight, you imbeciles!” he screamed.

The room became quiet as if a silence spell was cast on the room itself. There wasn’t any noise other than Park Deok-Gu’s screams. He kept on looking around while shouting that I had to be saved, but no one answered him.

Aside from Park Deok-Gu, everyone realized that something was off.

To make matters worse, someone was sobbing, and it was obviously Jung Ha-Yan.

"*Heuuuung*. Oppaaa… *Heuuuuuuung*…!"

I didn't look away because I thought that I would start pitying her, but not only did her voice sound sad, but she was also crying out loud in anguish. I thought for a second about how I should act, but I didn't make any changes to my plan.

I started walking slowly, and their eyes landed on me. I took a deep breath and acted as if this nauseating room filled with tentacles was refreshing, but the way people looked at me didn't change.

It actually wasn't bad…

They looked at me as if I had obtained a new power, and the unknown satisfaction I felt while looking at the ceiling was the best ad-lib a supporting actor could make in a ten million box office movie.

Some were already crying, while others felt hopeful. However, the people in the latter category quickly fell into despair because Rimoura started walking toward me.

"Hyung-nim! Run away! What are you doing?! Let go! Let go of me!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

"Calm down!"

"Are you just going to stand by and watch? We don't know what that monster will do to hyung-nim! Let go of me!" he said.

"Please calm down!"

"Hyung-nim! Can you hear me? Let go of me! Let go of me! Shit! Let go! Let go of me, you bastard!" he cursed.

As Rimoura got closer to me, Park Deok-Gu's sincere yelling got louder. However, he had to have finally realized that something was off because he went silent and revealed the same expression as the others.

Their expression turned grim when Rimoura hugged me lightly.

Park Deok-Gu was both in disbelief and despair.

My mouth moved slightly, and everyone gulped, curious about what I was about to say.

I spoke in a deep voice and cold voice that would convince them that I had been corrupted.

“It’s noisy.”

“*Huh?*”

“…”

“W-What are you saying?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“You’re loud. I was feeling really refreshed, but I feel uncomfortable right now,” I replied.

“Have you come to your senses, hyung-nim?! If you have, look over here. It’s me, Park Deok-Gu! Your little bro, Park Deok-Gu!” he shouted.

“Oppa… Oppaaa!” Jung Ha-Yan yelled as well.

“Father Lee Ki-Young. Can you hear me? C-Can you hear me?” Sun Hee-Young asked.

“What are they blabbering about, Rimoura?” I asked.

- It’s nothing you need to worry yourself over, husband.

‘Why are you calling me husband?’

I was a bit dumbfounded by the fact that she called me husband, but I decided to let it pass because she had tried her best to hold out until she was on the brink of death.

Anyway, the script in my head told me that I was supposed to be under Rimoura’s control. Of course, it would be too much for me to appear as one of the members of the 27th Legion.

In addition, I would lose my charisma if they found out that I was working for someone.

Rimoura's sticky tentacles felt a bit uncomfortable, but the image we managed to portray didn't look so bad.

I was sure that my current image would be extremely shocking to those who still hadn't realized that they were standing in front of this region's final boss.

Honestly, I looked like a teenager in my rebellious phase, but people who had fallen into depravity often looked like this.

'And it's effective… '

"Oppa… *Heuuuuung*. Oppaaa…!" Jung Ha-Yan cried.

"…"

"Oppaaa… *Hiccup, hiccup*!" she called out to me again.

"…"

"Oppaaa…" she repeated.

The unaware Jung Ha-Yan kept on crying while calling out for me.

I wasn't used to my new job yet, but…

"I said it was noisy," I said.

A massive orb of energy instantly formed over my palm and flew toward Jung Ha-Yan.

'What the… '

I simply wanted to scare her, but the massive orb of energy contained an energy that made everyone here feel a sense of crisis.

I figured that it was because of Belial's specialty.

Jo Hye-Jin stood in front of Jung Ha-Yan and defended her.

Jung Ha-Yan looked at me in disbelief, while Jo Hye-Jin was in distress.

“Step back, Miss Ha-Yan. It’s dangerous,” Jo Hye-Jin suggested.

“…”

“It’s a lie. *Hiccup*,” Jung Ha-Yan commented.

“…”

“*Heuuuuung*. *Hiccup*. Oppaa…” she called out.

“Shut up, you dumb human,” I commanded.

“…”

‘Ha-Yan listens well.’

- No need to be angry, my husband. Those low lives who are giving you a headache will soon disappear.

“What did you do to the sub guild master?”

‘Wow, thanks for getting mad at the situation, Hye-Jin.’

- Is an explanation even necessary? It’s exactly what it looks like. He had just decided to join us. The weak human you’ve known for so long is no longer here. He is no longer the dog of that hideous Benigoa but the captain of the 27th Legion—a position he had obtained through Belial’s benevolence. He has also become my husband, and he entertains me every night. *Hehe*.

‘I don’t think there’s a need to add an unnecessary backstory, but… she really is worthy of being Belial’s favorite demon.’

She was so quick on the uptake that it honestly amazed me.

- Basically, you’re too late. *Pffft!* You ran all the way here without knowing that, and it’s honestly so funny that I want to laugh until my stomach hurts. I’m sure I’ve

entertained you a lot. What do you think? Did you enjoy it? It was really entertaining to see you all struggle with a sliver of hope that you weren't late, but unfortunately, that isn't the case.

"…"

- Yes, it's that face…! You lowly humans. Your expressions are perfect for humans like yourselves. I'd expect nothing less.

The way Rimoura trembled as if she was having an orgasm made it difficult to tell whether she was acting or not.

However, her expression was perfect.

'She's probably trying her best to increase her merit through a great performance.'

I thought that she had already accumulated a lot of merit because the majority of humans here looked as if they had lost all hope. A three-year-old kid would know that the people here were in despair. To make things worse…

'Man, Hyun-Sung… '

He was still looking at the ceiling in a daze, and the sight made me feel uncomfortable. He looked as if he had lost consciousness. I knew that his mind was weak, but I felt like I was looking at a living corpse.

'Is he okay?'

I thought that perhaps he had fainted with his eyes open because of Rimoura's attack earlier, but I realized that he was still awake because he was mumbling something.

He was mumbling something about taking his anger out on my contractee. The despair and the current emotions of Kim Hyun-Sung and the Sacred Democratic Country's expedition party made me think that they were more than enough merit compared to what Belial had invested so far.

I looked around indifferently, but I didn't see any humans who were thinking about resisting me. The majority of them looked as if they had given up, and they seemed convinced that they were really going to die here.

Elena and Kasugano Yuno were swaying as if their souls had left them, and I didn't even have to say anything about Jung Ha-Yan. The guild members and the priests of the Sacred Democratic Country kept on mumbling Benigoa's name in disbelief.

'They're supposed to get out of here… What should I do?'

There wasn't anything that they could do here. Surprisingly, the only one who was still relatively calm was Cha Hee-Ra. I thought she would immediately go on a rampage based on her personality, but she was actually acting like an experienced adventurer.

She looked around, and I was amazed at how she ordered people to get into a certain formation.

I couldn't help but think that they were about to retreat because Cha Hee-Ra's lips started bleeding as she bit them strongly, and her eyes became filled with tears.

"Let's retreat."

'You made the right choice.'

They had to retreat because the majority of them weren't in the condition to fight. Kim Hyun-Sung was the main damage dealer of the team. However, he wasn't in the best condition, so it would be too much for them to fight us.

Right now, I simply had to play along.

I stared at them coldly and said, "Kill them all."

- As you wish.

The room was instantly filled with a cacophony of noises.

'I was fuckin' charismatic. Shit…!'

CHAPTER 497
BECOME EVIL! (3)

'I'm glad because the fight is going to get easier.'

I was honestly afraid that there would be another variable because I still hadn't really figured out the ins and outs of my new job. It was a special job that the Semi-Mythic demon Belial had bestowed upon me, I was convinced that it was more powerful than the Alchemist of Light.

However, my proficiency was low, so it was difficult for me to do anything. To be honest, I didn't even know what type of spells I could cast. Therefore, it would be really risky for me to fight the expedition team of the Sacred Sacred Democratic Country right now.

I was kind of worried about many things, but the audience reacted better than I expected, so I was convinced that the situation would work out a bit better than expected.

Jung Ha-Yan had exhausted herself when she cast that teleportation magic earlier, and Kim Hyun-Sung had lost the will to fight, so he was being dragged away by Jo Hye-Jin.

'He'll faint at this rate… '

If this were real rather than fabricated, then the entire expedition team would have long been annihilated.

'However, it'll be a huge problem if Cha Hee-Ra loses it.'

Of course, they had to go through a fierce battle while retreating so the scene would look more realistic. After all, just letting them go without doing anything wouldn't create any tension.

I looked at them and saw the vanguards of the expedition team holding up their shields.

'Just like the manual… '

It was written in the manual that the priests, mages, and basically all the members of the rearguard had to escape first. However, it meant that the rearguard wouldn't be able to maintain their buffs on the vanguard, and it was indeed happening right now.

The vanguard was slowly losing their buffs, but they were still doing their best to hold out amidst the bombardment of the entire legion.

Park Deok-Gu bit his lips and maintained the line so that the others could escape. He had to be really nervous because his lips and legs were trembling. He hit the demons that were charging toward him and tried to get the melee damage dealers back into the formation, but it wasn't working out.

"H-Hold on! Go in… go inside. We'll follow the manual! Follow the manual!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

- *Krrrrrrgh!*

"Holy power! Holy power!" he shouted.

- *Roooooooooar!!*

"Make sure that the troops won't get buried and that they won't get swept away! Follow the rangers of the Black Swan! Be extra careful of the named monsters, keep your guard up, and the rearguards will retreat first! Protect the priests before anyone else!" he ordered.

Unfortunately, not everyone could retreat. Some melee damage dealers lost their chance to retreat, while some members of the vanguard and the rearguard got captured by the demons.

The demons would have smashed their heads apart if they were a part of the Federation, but these people were from the Sacred Democratic Country, so they couldn't just outright kill them.

Those captured here would most likely be kept to provide mana to this place, but it was better than dying. In addition, they would be able to go home safely once all this was over.

The soldiers were scared when their comrades were dragged away by the strange monsters, and they were so desperate to escape that they decided to abandon their comrades and friends.

'I can hear their performance[1] *rising… '*

"Ye-Jin! Ye-Jin!!!"

"Save me! Save me! Save me! *Ahhhh!* Oppa! Save me! *Kyaaaah!*"

'I told you that you guys aren't going to die. I'm just going to take your mana. I'll hurt you a bit unintentionally, but you guys won't die.'

"Guild Master… thank you… for everything. Please tell my wife and kids about what happened here."

"Shit! Hyun-Woo… Hyun-Woo!"

'I said that you guys aren't going to die.'

"You bastards! You demon scums! *Heuk*!"

"I don't want to die like this. Jason… like this…"

"Katrina…!"

There were people who had to leave, while there were people who had no choice but to stay. The situation reminded me of families being separated, but I didn't need that kind of soap opera right now.

Of course, I should be dancing around because I had definitely earned a lot of merit this time because of my performance, but I couldn't let things end here. I had to make sure that they would come back after retreating, and most importantly…

'I can't let them misunderstand… '

It would be a huge issue if they started seeing me as an enemy because I had gotten completely corrupted.

On the outside, I definitely looked like the demons had completely tainted me, so I

had to come up with an idea to show them that Light Ki-Young's soul was still sleeping deep in my consciousness.

I had to do that so that my allies wouldn't outright destroy me.

I nodded and immediately carried out the plan. The mana I managed to gather wasn't much, but I eventually gathered a decent amount of mana tinged with light.

'It's still not enough.'

Unfortunately, it wasn't enough to attract their attention, and it was also not enough for me to ensure that they wouldn't misunderstand me. However, I started nodding unknowingly after hearing a voice behind me.

[I'll help you with this.]

'Oh my, thank you, Belial…!'

[No need to act so humble. The benefits include this kind of assistance.]

'It's still a great honor. I'm very grateful.'

[*Haha*. Like I always tell you, there is no need for you to thank me. I should be the one thanking you. Can you believe it? Some of the commanders that are watching all this unfold from hell are applauding. They're the commanders who have been saying that the 72 Legions only know how to act high and mighty. Even Satan shook his head and clicked his tongue. Do you not have a conscience? You really are a disgusting human.]

'…'

[It's a compliment, not an insult. I've seen a lot of disgusting humans, but I've never seen anyone as disgusting as you. As expected from my contractor. I'd expect nothing less.]

'He seems a little too excited… '

His voice sounded higher than normal. I wasn't sure if it was because of my performance or simply because he was enjoying the current situation, but I believed that it was the latter. He was definitely acting like one of the top demons.

I felt kind of bad seeing the party members' shocked faces, but Belial seemed to be really enjoying all this.

I couldn't help but examine myself and see if I had really gotten corrupted, but it was clear that I wasn't *that* corrupted.

Anyway, a disgusting mana started forming over my palm, and it was more repulsive than I had expected. I presumed it was because Belial was simply too excited.

The expedition team's attention landed on me once more. It wasn't really strange because I was mustering an amount of mana that was similar to the amount of mana that Jung Ha-Yan had to muster to cast an extremely powerful offensive spell.

Of course, it was all for the show, and I wasn't really going to cast the spell.

I simply wanted to scare them.

"Shield magic. Shield magic!"

"Activate all the artifacts! Make up for the insufficient mana!"

"W-We have no idea what kind of spell that is… We've never seen that kind of black magic before, and… F-Father Lee Ki-Young is the one channeling the spell."

"Counterattack with a spell! Counterattack…!"

As expected, chaos immediately descended.

They desperately looked for a way out, but they couldn't see any way out of this.

"Oh god…!"

"No way…"

"Oh god… please…!"

A few people fell into despair once more as the clump of mana got bigger and bigger. There were some who thought that they could take the brunt of my spell, but they quickly gave up and could only watch me gather more mana.

Basically, I had gathered a tremendous amount of mana. Aside from a few members of the expedition party, I was sure that all of them had the same thought. In addition, they had no idea what kind of spell I was about to cast.

'They're going to die once this spell hits them.'

I was sure that they were thinking that way, and I even saw a few people casting spells to attack me. Jung Ha-Yan saw that, and she started swinging her dagger at the people who were channeling their spells against me.

'Wow, this is a mess. Ha-Yan. What's going on, Ha-Yan… Hey! Don't haphazardly swing your dagger like that! Geez… you'll end up stabbing someone!'

Of course, there was no way that their spell would reach me.

"You pesky humans…" I said coldly and extended my hand.

"It's over… It's all over…!"

"Damn it."

"Oh, Benigoa! Benigoa! A miracle, a miracle…!"

Everyone's faces were finally painted with despair.

I was about to lower my hand to deepen their despair, but I grabbed my head instead.

"Die, you insects—*Kgh*…!" I groaned in pain.

"*Huh?*"

"W-What the? How…"

The members of the expedition team were confused.

Naturally, I had to look like I was being tormented.

"*Kgh… Argh! Ah!*"

I had to give it my all. I had to act like my *soul* was actually rejecting my corrupted fleshly body because this scene was the most important scene.

"Run… now…! *Cough*! Hurry…"

"…"

"H-Hurry… There's no time…!"

With tears in my eyes, I looked at them and told them to run.

The tremendous clump of mana that looked as if it was going to explode at any moment abruptly vanished.

Everyone in the Nest fell into confusion.

However, hope quickly filled their eyes after realizing that Light Ki-Young and Doom Ki-Young were currently in a gruesome battle for supremacy inside Lee Ki-Young.

"Shit… Shiiit! *Aaaahhh!*"

Rimoura had to abandon her task of attacking the humans and kidnapping those who looked tasty. She ran toward me and checked my condition. I was sure that the humans thought that this was their chance because the fighting went into a lull once again.

The demon executives had arrived to check what was going on, so there was no way the humans could still launch another assault.

- It's Rimoura. Please come to your senses.

"In… front of me… stay away… I…"

- Husband, it's Rimoura. Do you not remember me?

"*Kgh*…!"

- You seem a bit tired. How about you rest?

"…"

- If you stay still, the pain will go away. Just accept it. It won't hurt you any longer. You won't be in pain anymore. Get rid of all the complicated thoughts in your head. Slowly… slowly… you won't be in pain. Yes, just stay in my arms.

'Wow, I really want to recruit her.'

I hadn't said anything to her, but she came up with her own ad-libs on the spot. In addition, she was also assisting me by explaining the story to me.

I wanted to applaud her, but her tentacles slowly wrapped around me, which made me feel a shiver down my spine because I was sure that the expedition team was looking at me.

Light Ki-Young briefly regained his consciousness, but the grotesque tentacles were slowly wrapping around him, and the faint light coming from him got fainter and fainter as the tentacles enveloped Light Ki-Young.

'As expected from Belial's number one pick…!'

Directors would surely love Rimoura if she were an actress. I also liked the fact that her tentacles were grotesque-looking. I nodded slightly in satisfaction and glanced at the expedition team.

I saw them moving in a hurry, as if this was their golden opportunity to escape. Of course, I also saw some people like Park Deok-Gu, who seemed reluctant to escape after seeing me regain my consciousness, albeit briefly.

"I'm coming back to save you no matter what," Park Deok-Gu said.

"…"

"Look straight into my eyes, hyung-nim. I'll come back no matter what, so just hold out until then. I'm going to save you no matter what. I'll make sure that… I'll make sure that you'll come back to your senses. *Kgh*…" he groaned.

The expedition team quickly dragged him out.

"I'm going to save you! Hold out a bit longer. Please, just hold out… Wait for me!" he screamed once more.

He was still screaming, but his desperate voice grew farther and farther away until it disappeared when the door to Rimoura's nest was finally closed.

Boom!

In the end, it felt as if everyone had managed to escape.

The demons gave me a round of applause, and I clenched my fists tightly.

'10 million dollars at the box office is secured, hot damn!'

---

1. the better performance, the more demon merit ☜

CHAPTER 498
A CLICHE THAT FLOPS BUT GROWS (1)

The situation didn't last that long, but it was so tense that it made my hands sweat. Of course, the situation hadn't ended just yet. They managed to escape using the retreat plan, but they still ended up sacrificing a few members of the expedition team.

However, Jung Ha-Yan was still suffering from the effects of mana exhaustion, so there was no way they could use Teleportation once more.

In other words, it was safe to assume that they would be using the escape route that Park Yeon-Joo had secured for them.

'I still don't know where they're headed going, though… '

However, it should only be a matter of time before their route was discovered because there were high priest demons deployed all over the regions under Belial's control.

I presumed that they were going to the 17th base because the Republic was currently attacking it. In addition, it wasn't that far from here. I deduced that they would go there and rest before deciding what steps they should take next. Of course, they only had two choices—group up with the other teams and attack once more, or give up everything.

It didn't matter what decision they would take because the current progression was almost perfect for me. It seemed a bit hasty, but fixing the messy situation had taken priority over anything else. Fortunately, I managed to succeed, and it resulted in me receiving cheers and applause from the nearby demons.

The demons reminded me of staffers who would applaud the actors after they were finally done shooting the final filming of their drama, but this was kind of different from that.

'It was only possible because everyone came together… '

Hobert growled, even though he could speak properly. Maruang's role wasn't that huge, but he had done his best. The Crisis Response Team and the staffers assigned to the situation room had also done their best for this project.

I knew it would make me look like scum to act like I was proud of the effect we managed to achieve, but I still couldn't help but smile.

There were a few demons who were cheering louder than the priests of the Sacred Demon Country, and there were even a few demons who approached to give me mysterious flower necklaces.

'This is why I like being the director.'

I wasn't sure exactly about the scale of my achievements, but the smiles on everyone's faces made it clear that my achievements were great.

- Your acting was amazing, advisor!

- *Wow!* Simply outstanding. Really!

- See, I told you.! I said it was going to be a success.

- Bring Advisor L-Lee Ki-Young to hell!

- Advisor L-Lee Ki-Young to hell!

- Advisor L-Lee Ki-Young to hell!

"*Hahaha*. Thank you, everyone. Really. *Haha*. These aren't necessary, through. Wait, you didn't have to pop a champagne," I told them.

- You worked really hard. I was kind of worried, but was this all part of your plan? If you had told us earlier, we could have made it even more perfect…

"You did really well, so there's no need to be disappointed, Miss Rimoura. I was kind of flustered by the sudden husband setup, but it's amazing that you were able to follow along without any issues. I didn't tell you anything, but you performed pretty well. I was really surprised," I said.

- About the setup… please think of it as me including a tiny bit of my personal

feelings into it.

'Stop trying to impress me. It's burdensome.'

- I was surprised as well, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I thought everything was going to end, but you immediately ran over and turned the tables. It was kind of abrupt, but you actually look more charming with your current look. Did you and Belial…

"Yes, we established a direct contract. Originally, he said it was impossible, but the continent is a bit unstable, so he managed to give me this benefit. *Hahaha*. By the way, how's your merit? Has it increased?" I asked.

- Yes, of course. It has increased more than I expected. I'm not sure if it's because the scene just now was broadcasted in the main city of the continent, but—Actually, just being here was enough to make up for all the losses I had to endure until now. I'm not sure about the exact number just yet, but if this continues, I think I'll be in the top 1,000.

"Top 1,000… With a bit more effort, you should have no issues being in charge of your own legion," I said.

- If that day actually comes, I would like to work with you no matter what. Of course, it won't happen anytime soon…

"I'll be really grateful if you give me that generous offer by then, Miss Rimoura," I told her.

- It seems like our advisor can only see Miss Rimoura and no one else. *Haha*.

"That's not true. This wouldn't have been possible if it hadn't been for all of you. We were able to carry this out smoothly because of each and everyone of you. If I could, I would repay every single demon that is here right now," I replied.

- Don't forget what you just said.

"Of course not. Now, let's wrap up," I suggested.

- Okay.

"Everything had worked out, but that was nothing more than the first step. There

were variables that even caught me off guard. Things had worked out, but it doesn't mean that things will keep on working out until the end. It's important to celebrate our first victory, but we also have to prepare for the work we have up ahead. I understand that we achieved a lot, but this is just the start," I explained.

- As expected…

"Let's take the humans we captured to the power house and draw out their mana. Right now, there are a total of—

- Five rooms.

"I see. I think it'll be for the best if we move the humans every now and then. Don't just move them in a different room; you also have to instill in them the fear of going to the food storage or to an even more dangerous place than that. Doing that should increase your performance as well. After you're done drawing out their mana, move them to the recovery room, but don't let them know that they're receiving treatment," I instructed.

- The humans are probably scared. I'm sure they're thinking that we're going to dispose of them. As expected… from the external advisor. You really are worthy of your evaluation. Indeed, you are more demonic than a demon.

'That's not true, you bastards.'

"*Ahem*, anyway, please do that. And aside from rebellions, please refrain from attacking them. I'm sure you already know, but I'm…"

- Of course, we're aware.

"Thank you for your understanding. Before we convene our official meeting, I'd like to take a look at the continent's current affairs…" I requested.

- We'll prepare it right away.

"Please prepare it in the situation room," I said.

- Okay.

I was naturally curious about the party members reactions—no, I had to know their

reactions. An innovative and pioneering director was great, but I had to know the public's opinion as well for me to formulate my next course of actions.

In other words, investigating the public opinion was always important.

I walked into the situation room and sat in one of the chairs like a victor. I placed my feet on a desk and grabbed a bottle of the wine that I really liked. I felt like i was in heaven. I snapped my fingers, and the magic hologram in the situation room flickered to life.

Naturally, I stared at the magic hologram displaying scenes within the Sacred Democratic Country before anything else.

'Well, their reactions are par for the course.'

Many people were praying in the square, and they were crying as if they had lost their beloved leader. Anxiety and fear riddled their faces. I also saw a few people who kept on denying the reality that they had seen with their own two eyes.

- Everything was a lie, everyone. What you had seen weren't scenes from the goddess' mirror. Those scenes had been fabricated by the demons to deceive us. There's no way that Father Lee Ki-Young has been corrupted. There's no way that a demon is capable of seizing the heart of our Father Lee Ki-Young.

- Raise your heads, denizens of the Democratic Country! Goddess Benigoa will give us power to overcome this trial. She will look over him. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid!

It was ridiculous, but the ones who were denying reality were the ones who looked the most scared out of everyone in the square. They were saying that there was no way I got corrupted, but their expressions betrayed their words.

It was obvious that the scene they had seen was real. The gloomy atmosphere was almost palpable, and the soldiers were moving around busily, seemingly doing something.

There were even some soldiers who had decided to take some of the rations for themselves, seemingly in preparation for something big.

A single glance at the expressions of the soldiers and priests was enough for anyone

to deduce that things weren't looking good.

'Looks like Benigoa will be able to return sooner than I thought.'

Their desperate prayers were becoming even more desperate—no, desperation wasn't the right word to describe it. Their prayers were basically their only method to fight for their lives. Their prayers were no different from the desperate prayer of someone who had unknowingly called out to their god after foreseeing a terrible accident.

'The balance of power has to be maintained… '

If we were to give them a reason to be desperate, then they would be desperate.

I couldn't help but be curious about why Benigoa and Belial weren't working together. If they were to join forces, I was sure that their performance would reach the moon.

A basic setup would be enough for them to create a water mill that would never stop spinning.

'I'm sure they're not aware of the concept of mutual aid.'

I looked around while clicking my tongue and saw people evacuating.

'This place must be near the regions under the Federation.'

It looked like a kingdom was evacuating their subjects after realizing that they were in danger because of their close proximity to the Federation. Unfortunately, it seemed that they didn't manage to gather all their belongings because they were traveling lightly.

The sight actually fractured my heart.

And more fractures appeared on my heart when I saw an anxious woman holding her son's hand in one hand and her daughter's hand in the other. Of course, the people around her didn't really look any different.

The scene of an elderly man fainting out of exhaustion was the cream of the crop. A priest and a woman wearing a fancy outfit quickly ran toward him and fed him a

bottle of potion. The priest was too exhausted to cast a simple vitality spell, which made their situation extremely clear in my eyes.

I felt uncomfortable upon realizing it.

- How much longer until we arrive at the nearest city, High Priestess Beryl?

- We still have a long way to go, my queen. It's a relief that there aren't any nearby monsters, but I'm not sure if the subjects will be able to endure the long journey…

- They will endure… My people—they will not give up no matter what.

- I'm sure the former king would have said the same thing. By the way, are you okay? The kingdom…

- I'm ashamed to see my father, but I'm sure he would have made the same decision as me. By the way, are the rumors true? I'm talking about Father Lee Ki-Young of the Sacred Democratic Country…

- It hasn't been confirmed yet. No one with such holy power has ever been corrupted, but if what we had seen is true, then we're in an unprecedented crisis.

- That's…

- You'll have to prepare yourself, Your Majesty.

It wasn't just in this region.

There was an unimaginable number of people leaving their homes.

I saw a small village that was razed to the ground in such a way that made it seem as if ferocious bandits had gone through the village. In addition, not even a single ant was crawling around the small cities.

The refugees had departed on a long journey despite their exhaustion, just to get away from Belial's territory. The sight was like an indirect representation of the current situation.

The regions that were far from Belial's territory weren't exceptions. Mysterious riots were happening in some regions, and there were even some nations that had to stop

operating after their production facilities inexplicably stopped working.

I couldn't even see a dog in the market of a few large cities that were famous for their large traditional markets—all I could hear was cries filled with despair and screams of agony.

The entire continent was filled with despair and fear.

And my head started hurting because it seemed that the fallen continent had no intention of getting back to its feet.

'What's wrong with them…?'

According to my plan, mankind should have been preparing their counterattack right now, but those that had gotten knocked down weren't getting up at all. They looked like boxers who got beaten up so badly that they couldn't get back up.

'Get back up, you bastards… '

To make things worse, a few nations suggested to stop resisting and giving up. I knew the continent would suffer greatly from all this, but it seemed that the damage was far worse than I thought.

The expedition team looked the same.

'Wake up and get back up, guys. Shit, be hopeful and get back up. Get back up, guys. Don't lose that sliver of hope. Shit…!'

I couldn't do anything else other than to closely observe humanity's last remaining rays of hope.

CHAPTER 499
A CLICHE THAT FLOPS BUT GROWS (2)

Armies that had lost on the battlefield would always look pitiful, and the Continental Union's expedition team was no exception. Many of them were severely injured, and the priests couldn't even wield their holy power, afraid that the demons would discover their location. In other words, the injured could only be treated with potions.

Everyone's senses were still heightened, so they were on edge. Unfortunately, they couldn't yell, so they couldn't cry their hearts out either. I[1] could hear people holding in their tears here and there, but I couldn't hear anyone criticizing them for sobbing.

'It's impossible to control that, anyway.'

This sounded cliched, but I was sure that the injuries on their heart were deeper than their physical injuries. I lowered my head upon recalling the people I had to leave behind in the nest. They were like family to me, but I had no choice but to leave them.

I could still remember the screams and the cries…

I could still see the people we had to abandon, and I could still remember how they screamed at us to leave.

I could still hear the roars of the demons as well, and I could still see the people we had abandoned being dragged away.

We managed to escape from that hell, but it wasn't strange that the troops were grieving.

However, the aforementioned weren't the only reasons we were grieving.

The Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild and the symbol of the Sacred Democratic Country was brainwashed by the demons. I reckoned that the shock of that discovery

alone had caused the collapse of the expedition team members' minds in the nest.

Some of the soldiers of the Republic, the named members of the Union of Kingdoms, dwarves, and the members of the other races didn't seem that shocked, but the soldiers of the Sacred Democratic Country and the elves were in despair.

The Sub Guild Master of the Blue Guild was the symbol of Benigo and Elune. He was also widely acclaimed to be the chosen of both Benigoa and Elune.

He had stood at the forefront of mankind and had shown everyone an incomprehensible miracle by uniting mankind and becoming the symbol of peace in addition to healing the continent's wounds.

He was also the emotional anchor of the Blue Guild and was like a mother to everyone in the guild.

The situation was worse than I expected.

"Jung-Yeon unni."

"Ye-Ri."

I turned and saw Kim Ye-Ri, the youngest member of the guild.

She was wrapped in bandages.

"How's your arm and leg? Are you feeling better?" I said cautiously.

"Yes. I can move around," Kim Ye-Ri replied.

"Your external wounds should be fine, but you won't recover your strength with just those bandages. Be careful not to overdo it. The bandages weren't infused with holy power as well, so you might feel uncomfortable. Take care of yourself as much as you can today, and once we reach the 17th base, I'll talk to Miss Elena and Miss Hee-Young, so we can take a look at your wounds again," I suggested.

"Okay. If the demons come back—"

"I think the derangement spell worked… so it shouldn't be a problem right now. Don't think about that and just rest for now. It's important to rest while it's possible

so we can think about our next move," I told her.

"Okay…"

It was difficult to tell, but I saw tears in her eyes. I was sure she was uncomfortable about all this because she also had a good relationship with the sub guild master, even though they often bickered.

Kim Ye-Ri had always come off to be uninterested in the people around her, but she was very caring. Therefore, it wasn't strange for her to react this way. She had a horrible past as well, so I reckoned that she found this situation to be traumatic.

Kim Ye-Ri's condition was actually better than the others.

I sighed when I recalled how there were still people who were still unconscious.

Miss Elena was still crying, while Miss Hee-Young hadn't eaten a proper meal for quite a while now. Ah-Young, Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo, and Mr. Chang-Ryeol looked gloomy because of their nature, but out of all the guild members, the ones who received the most shock were the three original members of the guild's first party.

Miss Ha-Yan was unconscious more often than she was conscious. Whenever she was awake, she would talk to herself, bite her nails, pull out her hair, and then she would start screaming until she passed out.

She even tried to commit suicide.

If it hadn't been for Miss Sora, Miss Ha-Yan could have severely injured herself.

However, Miss Sora herself didn't look any better than Miss Ha-Yan.

Miss Sora looked like she was mentally stable, but I kept feeling that she was overdoing it. I even saw her blaming herself and holding back her tears, which broke my heart.

However, the biggest issue was…

"How's the guild master?" I asked.

"Oppa is…" Kim Ye-Ri started.

“Yes?”

“I think he’s still unconscious. He used a lot of mana in the fight with the demon earlier, and I think he hurt his head at the end… Elena said that he received a huge mental shock, and he keeps on insisting that everything was his fault even though it’s not…” she continued.

“I’m sure he’s going through a lot, considering their relationship—”

“But he’s fine physically… It’ll take some time for him to recover his mana, but there’s a different issue that’s bigger than that… H-he doesn’t answer whenever people try to talk to him. Elena suggested that we leave him be for now, but… h-he should be fine, right?” she asked.

“I’m sure the guild master will be fine,” I replied.

“No, Mr. Ki-Young…” she said.

“*Ah*, of course, he’s fine. You still remember it, right? The spell that the sub guild master tried to cast before we left.” I pointed out.

“Yeah…”

“They say that he briefly woke up. Many people saw it happen, including Mr. Deok-Gu. I think that’s the reason the spell was canceled. I don’t know the details, but there’s a huge chance that he’s fighting himself inside,” I explained.

“You think so?” she asked.

“I don’t know what the demons had done to the sub guild master, but there are too many questionable things for it to be a simple brainwashing spell. He was definitely under immense pressure due to the torture and those tentacles, t-the demon and… tentacles… the… t-tentacles… tentacles—I mean, I think we shouldn’t talk about this. S-Sorry,” I apologized.

“I already know everything,” said Kim Ye-Ri.

“A-Anyway, I’m sure they used all sorts of methods to break the sub guild master’s mind. If a simple brainwashing spell were enough, then they probably wouldn’t have used those methods, but I believe that they were in a hurry,” I continued.

“I see…”

“I’m not certain of this, but…” I paused.

“No, I’m sure you’re right.” a familiar voice interrupted.

I turned and saw a woman with large horns on her head.

I was kind of surprised, but I released a sigh of relief because if she was here, then they had successfully conquered the 17th base. I gave a thumbs up to them for providing us with a place to rest—both physically and mentally.

“Miss Dialugia,” I said.

“My connection with him hasn’t been severed.” Dialugia pointed out.

“Are you saying that…”

“Yes, your presumption is correct. It’s becoming faint, but I’m sure that man is resisting Belial’s power. I don’t know how much time we have left, but… he has always been a stubborn person, so I’m sure that he’ll endure it just fine,” she replied.

“That’s a relief…” I remarked.

“By the way, are these all the troops that will be heading to the 17th base?” she asked.

“Yes,” I answered.

“I’d appreciate it if you could tell them that it’d be great if they could move a bit faster. I think the enemy’s army is nearby. I’ll investigate the situation a bit more, but we need to keep our guard up so that the enemy troops won’t get any closer…” she suggested.

“Thank you…” I said.

“No need to thank me. I… just can’t have t-that human die on me… and I’m indebted to the Blue Guild, anyway. As for Luria…” Dialugia trailed off.

“Okay…”

“I’ll leave it to you,” Dialugia said.

“Should I come with you?” Kim Ye-Ri asked.

“No, you should rest here. I’ll be quick,” I replied.

“Okay…”

“*Whew*.”

Miss Dialugia disappeared into the crowd, and I walked faster to catch up to the people ahead of us. I quickly caught up to Cha Hee-Ra of the Red Mercenary Guild, and it seemed that she was having a serious conversation with someone.

My footsteps lightened at the thought of delivering a good piece of news after quite some time, but I felt someone pushing me away.

“Miss Hee-Young?”

The person who pushed me was Sun Hee-Young, one of the original members of the guild’s first party. The frown on her face as she passed by me made it obvious that she was in a bad mood.

As expected, she started shouting, “Tell the troops to go back there!”

“Please don’t do this.”

“I ordered you to send the troops back there!” she yelled.

“It’s impossible. I understand how you feel, but we have to observe—”

“Let go of me. Let go! Don’t touch me. I said, don’t touch me! Send the troops back there, you bitch! Can you not hear me?!” she cursed.

“What do you think you’re doing?!”

“Send the troops back there! Tell them to go back there!” she screamed.

“Hold her down! Make sure that she can’t move!”

“Let… go!” she yelled.

“If you cause any more trouble, I’ll punish you for disobeying orders, Miss Sun Hee-Young. I understand how you feel, but everyone is having a hard time. Please calm down and—”

“Punish? Do you even have any idea about who should be punished here? How dare you say you’re going to punish me! Did that bitch Cha Hee-Ra tell you that? To lock up all the bitches who would dare to rebel? They call people like her an ass in the lion’s skin. She has been using our sub guild master as she pleased, but she suddenly doesn’t want to get involved in a crisis?” Sun Hee-Young complained.

“It’s because of the unprecedented situation. We have no choice—”

“Have you ever thought about trying to save him? You people are useless! All of you are nothing but trash. Every single one of you! You all act like a parrot, calling him Father Lee Ki-Young and whatever and then showering him with everything you have, but now, you’re just going to throw him away? You sly and incompetent bitches!” she cursed.

“Miss Cha Hee-Ra is also going through a lot right now. Please don’t do this. Return to the outpost for now, and I’ll deliver information—”

“Do you know who’s having the hardest time?” she asked.

“…”

“I asked you a question,” she said.

“Well…”

“Can you even imagine how miserable and sad he felt the moment we left the nest? He has been living his whole life in service to others, and he disregarded his safety to help the evacuating denizens of the Federation, but he ended up getting caught…

“He had always been like that—*kgh*—he was always prepared to sacrifice himself for the sake of others, but he had always been the only one suffering from the consequences of his actions…

“There was even that incident where he sacrificed himself to the point of suffering

injuries that rendered him bedridden and on the verge of death. He only lived because of holy power and medicine. He had done so much for us, and this is how we're going to repay him? Kgh…" Sun Hee-Young said.

"…"

"Is this really the treatment he deserves?! Can you imagine how sad he must be when he saw his allies turning around and running away instead of saving him? Can you imagine how miserable he must've felt at that moment?" she questioned.

"…"

"You people are useless. You bastards are useless. The continent does not need useless bastards like you…" she insulted.

"I completely understand, Miss Sun Hee-Young, but…"

"If you understand, then tell the troops to go back! It's an order!" she screamed.

Her scream sounded like a shriek.

---

1. Hwang Jung-Yeon's POV ☜

CHAPTER 500
A CLICHE THAT FLOPS BUT GROWS (3)

'Wow, thanks, Hee-Young.'

Her speech almost made me cry.

Her impassioned speech while on the verge of crying made me wonder if she was the same Sun Hee-Young I[1] knew. She had a strange side, but she was usually withdrawn, so that side of hers truly caught me off guard.

'Her current personality and her personality in her past life aren't that different from each other. I'm not that sad, so you can stop now. You'll make Hee-Ra noona mad.'

Objectively speaking, I completely agreed with Cha Hee-Ra's decision because if she had let her emotions control her and made the troops push forward, they would have been annihilated.

A tactical retreat to recover and plan the next course of action was the best course of action Cha Hee-Ra could have taken. It was also what I wanted her to do, and it was the most reasonable decision back then.

Therefore, it wasn't strange that Cha Hee-Ra pressed the execute button to retreat.

In addition, it wasn't a situation where one could find fault with others.

Cha Hee-Ra had always been the type of person to let her emotions take over her, but she had chosen a rational approach for some reason, so I presumed that she felt desperate as well. Of course, overcoming the sense of guilt was a different problem.

Anyway, I started getting scared because Sun Hee-Young was still talking bluntly.

- You wretched bitches! Wretched bitches! *Ptooey!*

The situation had become more interesting because of Sun Hee-Young, who had unexpectedly met my expectations. It was a bit absurd, but the members of the Red

Mercenary Guild seemed like they had no idea what to do with her.

'This is crazy.'

In the end, Cha Hee-Ra showed up to handle the situation. The red-headed woman looked really exhausted as she Sun Hee-Young with a gloomy look that I had never seen before.

'What's wrong with all of them?'

There was something off with everyone's expression. I looked back at Sun Hee-Young and saw her slapping Cha Hee-Ra. There was a crisp sound as Cha Hee-Ra's head was forcefully turned to the side.

The people around them immediately went quiet.

If Cha Hee-Ra were to swing her fist, then Sun Hee-Young would die right there and then.

I was afraid that Cha Hee-Ra would run rampant, but the red-headed woman behaved in a way that didn't fit her usual demeanor.

She didn't look like a beast that got hurt. It seemed that Cha Hee-Ra had no plans of harming Sun Hee-Young because she neither avoided nor blocked Sun Hee-Young's slap. Still, it was interesting to see a different side of her.

In addition, Cha Hee-Ra finally started talking. I couldn't really hear what she was saying because the familiar was quite far from them, but I was able to pick up a few words from reading her lips.

- Are you satisfied now?

-…

- I asked if you're satisfied now.

- *Kgh.*

- If we send the troops back there, what are you going to do?

- You, you…

- The mages are out of mana, and they can barely cast their spells. If we were to take them back there along with your dumb guild master, it would be tantamount to suicide. I don't plan on dying like that, and I am not planning on giving up on my darling. If you want to vent your anger, then do it somewhere else. You can also go back there and die by yourself. If you don't want to do either of those, then shut up and follow my orders.

- Are you serious right now…

- Do you think that bastard will like it if we go back there? I don't really like reasonable decisions, but our situation calls for reasonable decisions. Basically, we'll have a better chance if we regroup with the others and plan our next course of action rather than making the troops go back there right now. Do you understand?

- D-d-do you really think that I don't know that? Do you really think that I'm acting like this because I don't know that?! *Heuk,* do you really think that I don't already know that?!

Sun Hee-Young slapped Cha Hee-Ra again. Cha Hee-Ra didn't do anything other than take the hit.

Hwang Jung-Yeon appeared out of nowhere to stop Sun Hee-Young from slapping Cha Hee-Ra, but she couldn't really stop Sun Hee-Young because she was exhausted. Of course, Sun Hee-Young became tired first, and her hand was bleeding rather than Cha Hee-Ra's cheek.

- If you're done venting your anger, then go away and recover. Doing that will be more helpful than throwing a tantrum like this. And you—

- I'm Hwang Jung-Yeon of the Blue Guild. Miss Dialugia has said that they have successfully conquered the 17th base… she told me to tell you to move even quicker, and I-I came here to deliver that; I'm really sorry…

- Well received, and there's no need to apologize.

- No, I'm sorry for the trouble…

- No, I completely understand.

- You… *Whoo, whoo.* If something happens to Mr. Lee Ki-Young, I'll seriously kill you. I'll really kill you…

- Miss Hee-Young, please stop. I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. She's usually not like this…

- Do whatever you want. If that actually happens, I don't plan on living a long life, anyway. Anyway, you heard the report just now, right? Stop interrupting the march and get out of my sight. I won't punish you.

- L-Let's leave, Miss Hee-Young. Please stop this…

- I'm really going to kill you. You heard me, right? I'll kill you no matter what. I'll rip you to pieces. Remember what I said. You better pray that Mr. Lee Ki-Young is alive. You better pray…!

-…

Lee Chang-Ryeol arrived, and they managed to forcefully drag Sun Hee-Young out of the scene.

I thought about sending the familiar to the Blue Guild, but I couldn't look away after seeing Cha Hee-Ra looking at the ground, surrounded by her guild members.

I couldn't tell whether she was laughing or crying, but the way her shoulders trembled made me feel sad.

The guild members surrounded her to prevent outsiders from hearing the commotion earlier, but it made her feel even more isolated. She couldn't show her weak side since she was the current leader of the expedition team, and I was sure that her guild members also didn't want to see this side of her either.

- We should have punished her…

- What do we stand to gain by punishing a priest who's on the same level as the saintess? We need her on the battlefield. Just make sure that what happened here won't spread because it'll most likely confuse the others.

- Yes, ma'am.

-…

- I’m sure he’s safe…

- Thanks.

Cha Hee-Ra briefly stopped walking to express her gratitude. Eventually, she started walking once again, and I could see on her face that she was both anxious and worried.

She was definitely having a hard time. Not only did she have to handle the current situation by herself, but she had to fight with that burdensome feeling of guilt. I was sure that she was thinking about all sorts of things right now, and she was definitely thinking about whether she had made the right choice or not.

To be honest, I was surprised that she was still standing. It would have been great if she had someone who could share some of her burdens, but they were in the worst-case scenario with everyone else on the same level as her out of commission.

I felt the same way when I looked around the guild earlier.

Jung Ha-Yan would scream, attempt suicide, and faint whenever she was awake.

Elena couldn’t do her job properly because she was constantly crying.

Kasugano Yuno wasn’t a Blue Guild member, so I had no idea what she was doing.

Park Deok-Gu and Cha Hee-Ra were the only ones who were mentally *stable,* but their current condition actually made me feel nervous.

However, I was the most worried about Kim Hyun-Sung’s condition.

‘I really should check up on him… ’

I wanted to run over there and check my lovely Hyun-Sung’s condition, but I couldn’t approach him. According to Hwang Jung-Yeon’s conversation with Kim Ye-Ri, it sounded like he still hadn't come back to his senses.

Still, I had to check up on him because he was mankind’s last hope.

‘At this rate, there will be neither dream nor hope. You have to come back to your senses, Hyun-Sung. Seriously.’

My plan succeeded, but it was too successful. I knew there would be some issues, but I didn't expect him to directly collapse from the shock.

The troops were on the brink of death, and the atmosphere was a mess.

I didn't have to look around to know the general atmosphere of the expedition team.

The incident involving Sun Hee-Young just now was the only time the issue bared its ugly fangs. However, many things were already bothering me, especially the troops.

Some of them were already suffering from the effects of the reveal.

'I'll be pushing it, but should I take a look?'

At this point, I started missing Jung Ha-Yan's Anemone's Eyes. I had no choice but to express my disappointment to my comrades in the situation room.

"Excuse me…"

- Yes?

"About the 17th base…" I started.

- *Ah*, yes, Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

"Are you able to deploy familiars there? Those that are more discreet…" I asked.

- We have already deployed them.

"That's a relief. Thank you," I said.

- It's nothing. You're the one doing all the hard work since you're monitoring everything. I could have never imagined that you would be able to focus on your work this quickly despite the recent victory. *Haha*.

'That's because it's not over yet, man. This is the important part… '

It looked like things were going to fall apart before my plan even started. Still, once the expedition team entered the 17th base, I should be able to take a closer look at the situation—no, at Kim Hyun-Sung's condition. Perhaps it was because of Dialugia,

but the expedition team reached the 17th base in just a few hours.

The familiars on standby came to life and displayed many different scenes on the magic holograms.

The army of the Republic that had already conquered the 17th base joined forces with Cha Hee-Ra, and they were talking about many different things.

Not only were they discussing things related to the overall situation, but they were also discussing new issues that had come up.

However, our lovely regressor's condition was the most important issue that had to be addressed as soon as possible.

'Mankind's last hope!'

The stepping stone to turn the tables.

'The main character of the story.'

He was the perfect protagonist.

'He's the protagonist of this game and the terminator who will end this scenario… '

I started looking for Kim Hyun-Sung at the 17th base with great expectations, and I finally found him inside a small room. Jo Hye-Jin was supporting him, and I couldn't help but gulp when I saw his face.

'What's going on… '

"Guild Master, I'll… be heading out now," Jo Hye-Jin said.

'What's wrong with his face?'

His soulless face didn't look any different from the first time he saw the corrupted version of me. It looked like he hadn't recovered at all. I couldn't help but think that perhaps Rimoura's tentacles had injured him quite badly as well.

'M-M-Mankind's last hope… '

Mankind's last hope didn't even notice the familiar inside the small room. He was looking at the sky with a thousand-yard stare. He was mumbling something, so I decided to let the familiar walk even closer to him.

"It's… over…" Kim Hyun-Sung mumbled.

'What do you mean it's over, man? What's wrong, Hyun-Sung? Seriously… '

I couldn't help but think that I had gone too far this time.

"I'm… tired…" he continued.

'D-*don't be tired, man. If you're tired, it's over.'*

His condition was even worse than I imagined.

'Don't be tired… Shit… '

Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he had given up on everything.

---

1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

CHAPTER 501
A CLICHE THAT FLOPS BUT GROWS (4)

I knew Kim Hyun-Sung would be out of his mind. Kim Hyun-Sung's eyes were blank in the expedition team's journey toward the 17th base. I couldn't help but get worried that he had suffered a brain injury or something after receiving a head injury from Rimoura.

However, he looked fine on the outside.

'Shit.'

And that was why I felt more desperate. One of the biggest benefits I would get out of this project was living a successful life with our lovely regressor. I imagined us walking toward a happy future while holding hands, but on the magic hologram, Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he was in a vegetative state. I was anxious because he looked so bad that I started questioning if he was still alive.

He looked as if he had lost all motivation to live.

His eyes were empty as if he had been living a monotonous life.

"I'm tired…"

No one was talking to him or asking him a question, but the way he kept mumbling reminded me of a mentally ill patient. He seemed like he was talking without much thought behind it. His soul had left him. The best description would be to say that he was mumbling without realizing it. I had heard about how people with aphasia would do such a thing, but it was my first time seeing those symptoms manifest.

'Was it really that shocking?'

Of course, I understood why it was shocking. I wasn't sure exactly what Kim Hyun-Sung thought about me, but I was sure that his fondness level toward me was at maximum. Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't good at expressing his feelings, but he wasn't a hard person to read. He cared more about me than Kim Ye-Ri, Jo Hye-Jin, and Park

Yeon-Joo, who were members of the Kim Hyun-Sung division.

The story about how he had been pampering me with luxury goods like the Chanelia Hermes Infinity Bag and various resources had long become famous in Lindel. There was even a rumor about how half of the guild master's salary was dedicated to pampering the sub guild master.

I wasn't sure where he got those items from, but he even gifted me a Legendary Beauty Slime Gel for the face, an elixir that was good for one's health, and a strange ginseng root that was apparently good for men.

The various catalysts he gifted me were items that couldn't be found even on the black market. It had gotten to the point that I was seeing his gifts more than his face.

At first, I doubted his intentions; I thought it was his way to tie down a talent. However, his gaze toward me kept on changing until I couldn't question his intent anymore. I wasn't sure exactly how much he liked me, but if I were to exaggerate a bit, he probably thought of me as his brother.

'Brother is a good word… '

I smiled in satisfaction because our relationship was deep and well-established. We had experienced many life-and-death situations. He had saved me from danger, and I had saved him from danger as well. Whenever we drank or talked, his serious expression would always go missing, so we were naturally fond of each other.

Our bond was even more special if one were to consider the heavy burden that our lovely regressor had been carrying on his shoulder by himself because no one could understand him.

I remembered something after hearing him mumbling about how he was tired. For years in his past life and in his current life, he had been carrying the heavy burden by himself, so I presumed that his mental instability wasn't strange.

I was sure that there were times when he got scared, lonely, and exhausted…

I was sure that there were times when he wanted to run away…

Saving the continent was an extremely heavy burden, and he probably thought that Light Ki-Young would help him carry that heavy burden. My method was different

from Kim Hyun-Sung's method, but I was definitely carrying the burden with him.

Everyone knew me as Benigoa's Chosen, but for him, I was someone who was trying his best to be prepared for the future that only he was aware of.

Regardless, Light Ki-Young was definitely Kim Hyun-Sung's close friend, and he was someone who was carrying his burden with him.

I had always been hoping that he would think of me as a brother, close friend, colleague, and someone precious enough for him to risk his life to save.

Therefore, I was happy when I received proof that it was indeed the case.

Anyway, the one-of-a-kind Light Ki-Young was suddenly corrupted and was now wearing a mask.

To make things worse, it looked as if all of this was his fault. In other words, it wasn't strange that he was losing his mind. I wasn't sure, but my mask probably reminded him of the same mask that the masked scum had been wearing in his past life, so there was a chance that he was thinking about running away from everything.

'Otherwise, it could be something scary.'

He was still traumatized after being backstabbed so many times by the masked scum and losing everyone precious to him. He was most likely thinking that he could lose me in this fight.

Of course, I could make my own guesses, but I wouldn't know for sure what he was thinking.

I wasn't actually sure if his mind had collapsed because he thought that I was the masked scum or if he simply couldn't endure the heavy burden anymore. If either of those two weren't the case, then it was most likely that he was scared about losing me.

Actually, I was sure that he wouldn't choose me over the world, so the thought that he was hiding like a coward right now because he was afraid of losing me didn't really sound convincing.

Honestly, I had no idea which of the three was the answer; actually, all three could be

the answers. The issue here was that Kim Hyun-Sung was now hiding like a turtle in its shell. To make matters worse, I didn't think that he saw me coming back to my senses, albeit briefly, while the expedition team was still in Rimoura's nest.

'Shit. Finding out the reason is one thing, but it's important to get him back on his feet.'

For the sake of my story and our relationship, I couldn't let him give up like this.

'Damn it. What should I do?'

I tried to think of ways to continue the story without Kim Hyun-Sung, but I couldn't think of any way to do such a thing.

It would be nice if he came out on his own and said, "I've awakened, heh," but in the current situation, it would be difficult to expect something like that.

An external factor had to stimulate him.

'I don't think I need to go out of my way to fix this… '

There were many people around Kim Hyun-Sung. In a cliche, the heroine would help the protagonist break out of their shells in hopeless situations like this.

'Park Yeon-Joo, Jo Hye-Jin, and Kim Ye-Ri.'

I couldn't consider Kim Ye-Ri a heroine, but she was a younger sister that Kim Hyun-Sung trusted and cared for a lot. Park Yeon-Joo and Jo Hye-Jin were openly acting like his advisors as well as his mistresses. Of course, he had rejected Jo Hye-Jin once, but they remained close despite that.

I thought it would be best to just let him rest for today, but I was sure that something would happen.

I hoped that if he heard a line that was touching enough to be engraved on his heart, I was hoping that he would stand up and exclaim, Hey! Grab your weapons! And let's go save our Ki-Young!"

I couldn't help but expect that kind of awakening cliche. As expected, I saw people walking around the next morning. They had to have thought that they needed to help Kim Hyun-Sung come back to his senses.

I saw them entering his room and talking to him slowly.

- Guild Master.

-…

- Have you eaten…

-…

- I'll leave this here for now.

Jo Hye-Jin's first defeat.

- Oppa…

-…

- Are you okay? You're okay, right?

-…

Kim Ye-Ri's second defeat.

- Guild Master, are you feeling better today?

-…

- I understand that… the situation isn't good, but please hang in there. I know it won't be easy, but I'm sure we'll be able to save him.

-…

- It's not your fault, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I hope you don't blame yourself too much because of this incident.

Park Yeon-Joo's third defeat.

- I'm sure the sub guild master is safe. I'm sure he'll hold out until the end…

-…

- It’s not your fault, Guild Master. It’s not. I-I’m sure the sub guild master doesn’t want to see you acting like this. At least—

-…

-…

-…

- *Whooo,* I’ll come back later.

Jo Hye-Jin’s 4th defeat.

- We need to get revenge. Are you just going to stay here like this, oppa? Are you really not going to do anything?!

-…

- Get a hold of yourself. Please… please get a hold of yourself… I’m really scared. *Heuk*—really—*heuk!* I’m really scared.

- I’m tired…

- *Heuuuk*, please, get a hold of yourself… please…

- It’s over…

Kim Ye-Ri’s 5th defeat, Jo Hye-Jin’s 6th defeat, and Park Yeon-Joo’s 7th defeat.

‘Shit. This has become a really huge problem.’

A day turned into two days, three days, and four days. Jo Hye-Jin suffered her 11th defeat, Park Yeon-Joo suffered her 12th defeat, and on the fourth day, Jo Hye-Jin suffered her 22nd defeat.

They had said a few decent lines that made me feel touched, but Kim Hyun-Sung didn’t change. He wasn’t eating, and he never left his tiny room. At this point, it wouldn’t be strange to think that he had locked himself up in a prison of his own

consciousness.

I had no knowledge of psychology, so I wasn't sure what was going on, but what could I do otherwise? I couldn't help but feel suspicious if he was wandering in his own consciousness like the protagonists of those old Shonen comics.

It was true that this was what I wanted, but I didn't expect that things would go wrong. I thought he would get back on his feet at the right time, but his condition seemed to be more serious than I thought. He was hiding deep inside his consciousness.

'It's ruined. Damn it. It's ruined… '

Kim Hyun-Sung's time had stopped, but the ongoing situation continued mercilessly.

Belial's territory and army continued to expand. The 41st, 42nd, and 43rd bases were finally recaptured by Belial's forces, sending the people of the Federation into a frantic evacuation. To make matters worse, the incident was broadcasted all over the world.

The continent plunged into chaos, and everyone felt as if the peace of the continent was hanging by a thread.

In addition…

- Excuse me… Advisor Lee Ki-Young.

- Yes?

- Mr. Donovan said that after taking care of the 41st base, he's going toward the 17th base. He said that he'd show you a performance that's definitely going to satisfy you…

'What is that bastard doing over there?'

The crazy Donovan was leading the hard-liner demons to destroy the 17th base, which was currently in chaos. I had prepared a few safety devices just in case, but I was honestly worried that this bastard would cause more trouble when things were already chaotic. The members of the Blue Guild had all approached Kim Hyun-Sung to talk and show how much they cared for him, but he didn't show any reaction.

Jung Ha-Yan was still suffering from mana exhaustion, and she kept on slipping in and out of consciousness. Out of the 4-person tutorial members, the sanest one was Park Deok-Gu, but he—

- Mr. Deok-Gu, will you be okay? Really…

- Hyung-nim isn't here… and the bro is suffering… Y-You're bedridden as well.

-…

- I should do it. This time… I-I'll do it. I can't make hyung-nim and the bro suffer any longer. I'm going to do it this time. It's my turn.

Park Deok-Gu didn't encourage Kim Hyun-Sung at all. He left Kim Hyun-Sung alone to try and bear the entire situation on his own.

CHAPTER 502
A CLICHE THAT FLOPS BUT GROWS (5)

'So what are you going to do, you pig?'

His thoughts are praiseworthy, but Park Deok-Gu wouldn't be able to get anything done. I felt kind of bad for saying this, but even if he suddenly awakened, there was a high chance that the situation would remain unchanging.

If he were Legendary, he would be between mid and low Legendary, so there was no way he could fight a Semi-Mythic monster. He was capable of being a special meat shield, but I was extremely familiar with his limits.

I knew too well he wouldn't be able to do anything beyond being a meatshield.

'Stay out of it, Deok-Gu. That's the answer to situations like this.'

It wasn't just Park Deok-Gu. Right now, fighting Donovan's army would be too much for everyone in the 17th base. If he were the only Semi-Mythic rank demon, then Cha Hee-Ra and a few others could stop him, but there were quite a few high-ranked hard-liner demons with him.

I sent a few soft-liners to Donovan's army just in case, but I felt like those few soft-liners wouldn't be enough. Right now, the best thing to do was to abandon the 17th base and retreat to reorganize the troops.

However, the problem was that the people in the 17th base looked like they didn't want to retreat. The base had already received news that Donovan of the Four Heavenly Kings was going to attack them, so they were busy preparing for the upcoming siege.

'I knew that they would do something like this, but I'm sure they also realized that they can't be pushed back any further.'

The 17th base was the final line. As a strategic point, the 17th base was basically their last resort. If they were to abandon this base, then not only would they have to

travel far to go back, but they also wouldn't be able to guarantee the success of the Second Federation Recovery Plan. I was sure that Lee Ji-Hye thought the same. If the plan involved a long, drawn-out war, then they could have abandoned this place. However, their plan was designed based on a short war, so they couldn't abandon this base.

Based on her personality, Lee Ji-Hye would probably choose a slower method to tackle all this. However, the golden time was running out, so Cha Hee-Ra definitely didn't want to make the troops retreat from here.

'All they have to do is to stop them… '

If they succeeded, then they would profit a lot.

The biggest profit would be vanquishing the depressing atmosphere of the base.

Unfortunately, it would be difficult to achieve that.

After all, Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Hyun-Sung weren't in their right minds, and the morale of the troops was at its lowest.

The situation was different from when the Continental Union fought Donovan at the 41st, 42nd, and 43rd bases. To make things worse, Donovan was charging toward the base with quite a few powerful demons, so this was a nerve-wracking situation for them.

'Why is this situation getting worse? Damn it…!'

I thought we were near the end, but the unchanging truth it seemed that one still couldn't have their cake and eat them, too.

Seeing that there were several things on the line, this type of crisis was to be expected, but humans would always prefer the easiest method to achieve their goals.

I sighed. I couldn't help but think that I had to start moving.

"I'm going to head toward the 17th base."

- Will you be leading the troops yourself?

“No, that’s not… I just want to be ready for any unexpected situations. Please tell Mr. Donovan to slow down the march. Actually, tell him to turn back and come back here with the troops…” I ordered.

- We’ve warned him about doing things that are not in the script, but he decided to charge on his own. It looks like he turned off the communication line as well. All he said was that he was going to bring results…

‘Seriously, he’s trolling… ’

Considering his current location, Donovan would arrive at our headquarters than at the 17th base. There were a few hours of travel time between Donovan’s army and my current location, but I wasn’t sure if Kim Hyun-Sung, Jung Ha-Yan, or even that pig would be safe in the interim.

I had told them that there were people that they shouldn’t kill, no matter what, but I wasn’t sure if that idiot Donovan actually memorized the list of people that I had told him.

‘Man, what is Kim Hyun-Sung doing? That dummy… ’

If he got back up and took up his sword, then I wouldn’t be able to guarantee what would happen next.

Time was running out…

I thought about infiltrating the 17th base as Bitch Ki-Yeon and giving him a few knuckle sandwiches as treatment, but I had no idea how to get my hands on a fairy, and there was no way I could infiltrate the 17th base.

I thought hard and long about it, but *physically,* it was an impossible task.

I spoke urgently, and a demon in the situation room definitely realized that things weren’t going well because they sounded nervous.

“I’ll be going there right now. Please prepare a carriage, and I’d be grateful if you could move this situation room right into the carriage. I’d also like someone with enough experience controlling familiars to come with me…” I requested.

- I’ll go, Advisor Lee Ki-Young. Additionally, how many guards…

“I don’t think I’ll need any, but…” I paused.

- Then how about taking Miss Lonovera?

“That’s not a bad idea. I’ll leave that to you,” I replied.

- Okay, I’ll do my best.

They mentioned Lonovera, so it seemed that she had told them something.

She probably told them that she would pay them back later for the favor or…

‘Are they affiliated with Lonovera?’

It didn’t really matter.

Arriving at the 17th base as soon as possible was more important than that.

Soon, I saw the carriage that I had requested. Lonovera flapped her wings happily as if she were about to go on a leisurely trip. However, she spoke nervously upon seeing me.

- Mr. Lee Ki-Young!

“*Ah!* Miss Lonovera. Thank you very much for agreeing to come with me. Let’s talk inside the carriage,” I suggested.

- By the way, a-are you okay? You look really tired. I heard you’ve been staying in the situation room, but you look like you’ve lost weight.

“It’s because there’s a small problem. I just haven’t been getting enough sleep. Anyway, don’t worry about it,” I replied.

- Is our journey to the 17th base related to that?

“Yes. I’m not sure if you heard, but Dono—”

- Mr. Donovan. I knew he’d cause trouble one day, but who could have known that he would pull something like that this time? I wonder how long Belial will continue working with an ignorant demon like him.

"*Ha… haha.* I believe that he's just more enthusiastic than others," I commented.

- It's not something you can think positively about. You can talk to me comfortably. He must be thinking that Belial will praise him for his contribution if he charges in ignorantly. He still has no idea that times have changed. A demon should act like a demon to be a demon. You were right.

'You're right… '

I wanted to applaud and cheer, but I couldn't do that.

I entered the carriage with an awkward smile, and the carriage moved immediately as soon as I entered. It felt like the carriage was moving faster than I thought, but I knew that Donovan would reach the 17th base in just a few hours, so I felt anxious.

It would be nice if he decided to create a camp in front of the base and repaired their gear before entering, but an incompetent guy like him would never do something like that.

I was sure that he would charge right in to seize the victory and boast about it once he won.

I decided to check up on Kim Hyun-Sung and saw that he was still the same.

'Shit.'

Kim Ye-Ri, Park Yeon-Joo, Jo Hye-Jin, Elena, and the other guild members had visited him. They all said touching words, but Kim Hyun-Sung still looked out of it.

Naturally, I started to feel frustrated.

In the end, everyone definitely decided to defend the base without Kim Hyun-Sung because no one visited him anymore. I was sure they thought that leaving him alone would be more effective than talking to him.

The guild members were definitely as frustrated as me, and they looked anxious about the upcoming battle.

Their anxiety had spread throughout the entire camp.

I saw Cha Hee-Ra gathering the troops and giving a nice speech, but all it did was encourage the troops a little bit. Everyone was doing their best to finish the preparations, but a few of them looked as if they had lost the will to fight.

'Damn it.'

Naturally, a complicated thought popped into my head.

I realized that they couldn't avoid this battle.

'What the hell can I do even if I get there?'

I thought of ways to turn the table, but nothing came to mind.

I thought that stopping Donovan was the most important task, but I wouldn't be able to stop him with my weak body.

In addition, even if I were to stop him, the expedition team and the troops in the 17th base would definitely not believe that I was the one who had stopped Donovan.

It would be absurd that the corrupted Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country was suddenly on the same side as them and was fighting with them.

I couldn't choose that method because not only would it confuse the audience, but it would also waste Doom Ki-Young's potential.

'What in the world is that bitch Benigoa doing? She still hasn't recovered yet?'

It would be nice if she intervened in Kim Hyun-Sung's life by giving him a quest or showing him a miracle.

She should have had enough holy power by now, but it seemed that she was still a runaway. I couldn't stop myself from cursing her. I was so annoyed by her incompetence that I started thinking that perhaps I would be a more efficient manager of this continent.

I thought that she would recover completely once the ongoing situation ended, but it seemed that she was only receiving a small amount of holy power despite the effort I had put into this continent.

'Seriously, man. She's not helpful at all. Maybe I should use this chance to work with Belial.'

If the offers that she would present to me after all this was over weren't satisfactory, then I would throw my holy power into the trash. The Alchemist of Light job was disappointing compared to the Dark Plaguelord job.

I kept on staring at the magic holograms with a frustrated look.

Lonovera saw that and spoke.

- A-Are you okay?

"Yes, I'm fine, Miss Lonovera," I answered.

- You don't look so good… More importantly, you look kind of exhausted, so how about a light nap for a bit?

"*Ugh*. I shouldn't sleep in this situation, and I feel like I won't be able to sleep, anyway," I replied.

- Hey, if you work while under stress, things that could have gone right would go wrong. Please take a nap. I'm sure you'll fall asleep as soon as you close your eyes. Have you forgotten about my race?

"Well, that's—*ah…!*"

- I'm not just any demon. I'm a succubus. What kind of dream would you like to have? I'm confident that I can give you a dream that's way beyond your imagination. If you wake up after spending a lovely time that you can't even imagine in the real world, I'm sure you will feel refreshed as if you have been sleeping for four days straight. Obviously, I won't be taking your energy, so there's no need to worry about that! B-But if you give it to me, then I'll gladly accept…

"Miss Lonovera!" I shouted.

- *Huh? Ah!* Yes? I-If you suddenly grab me like that… If you'd like to use a different *method* to rest, I'll need time to prepare…

"*Ah*, no. It's nothing like that," I told her.

Before I could even start speaking, however, Cha Hee-Ra's grand speech interrupted me through the magic hologram.

Her speech signaled the start of the battle.

- We're going to win today. Kill the demons, and we'll be able to bring back the symbol of the continent. This battle will go down in history. Today, we will prove that we still haven't lost the light.

- There are still many of those pesky humans. This loyal priest of Belial—Donovan of the Four Heavenly Kings—will be your opponent! I'll put all my heart and soul into ripping all of you apart. I'll use your souls as gifts to give to my close friend.

- I'm sure you're scared. I have no intention of criticizing those who are afraid of his threat and want to hide. However, think about it—think carefully about what's right! Will you live in hiding for the rest of your life or die with honor? Think again and again about which one is more honorable to you! Mankind… Mankind will win here today…!

- *Grrrrrr! Roooooooooar!!!*

- We will win!

However, speaking to Lonovera was more important to me right now.

"Are you able to enter the dream of someone that's kind of far away? Or if they're unconscious? I'm asking if I can, even if it's not you," I asked.

Lonovera nodded slowly.

I hugged her in joy. I pushed away the trembling Lonovera, and I managed to finally fall asleep after following her instructions.

'Hyun-Sung, your hyung is coming!'

When it came to breaking down the Berlin Wall standing tall in Kim Hyun-Sung's mind, a true friend would be better than a heroine.

I wasn't sure if I was currently in his mind, but I felt like I was being sucked away.

When I came to his senses, I saw him cowering in a corner.

I approached him slowly, and he raised his head.

“Mr… Ki-Young?” Kim Hyun-Sung questioned.

He stared at me in disbelief and started crying.

I clenched my fists at the sight.

“Yes, it’s me. *Ha… ha…”* I chuckled. *‘That’s right, damn it… your hyung is here, you bastard!’*

PDF by: traitorAIZEN